

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1889.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

CHAPTER VII.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

WHILE Mark Brown was terrifying Janet by discharging the old horse-pistol at his worthless head, Vera was riding slowly up the steep lane in which the above little drama was being enacted. She was lost in thought, for in her pocket was a letter from Captain Raleigh to her father, which she had just fetched from the post-office. Judging from her face, which was beaming with joy, her thoughts were happy ones, and perhaps little short of the sudden report of the pistol which startled her mare would have brought her down to mundane considerations.

A minute after the report of the pistol, Vera reached the spot from which it was fired, and seeing in the dusk a man lying in the hedge with a pistol at his feet, and Janet helpless and ready to faint leaning against a wall, she dismounted, and holding her mare, which was fidgety, with one hand, she put her other arm round Janet, who now began to sob hysterically.

"Janet! What is it? Are you hurt? Who is this man?" said Vera. For Mark's face was hidden, a pair of legs sticking up in the air being the most striking parts of his visible person.

"It is Mark, Miss Vera; he has killed himself, and I suppose it is all my fault. Oh! what shall I do? What shall I do?" and Janet wrung her hands in despair.

Two thoughts flashed through Vera's mind: the first that it was unlike Mark Brown to hurt himself deliberately in any way, the second that the legs of dead people did not usually stick up in the air in that fashion: and arguing from these two premises, she came to the conclusion that Mark was shamming.

"Get up this moment, Mark, or you'll get kicked; I can't hold Firefly as well as Janet" she said, sharply.

Her words had a magical effect on the supposed corpse. Mark sprang up in an instant, shook himself, and took Vera's mare, with an awkward attempt at a laugh, as he said in what was meant for an apologetic tone :

"I was only having a piece of fun, Miss Vera."

"Fun indeed ! I am ashamed of you, Mark. It was most cowardly conduct, and you have frightened poor Janet terribly. Take Firefly home at once. I shall speak to your master about this," said Vera, angrily.

Mark slunk off like a whipped hound, and Vera, picking up the skirt of her habit, pulled Janet's arm through her own, and led her slowly up the hill.

"I'll see you home, Janet, and stay with you till Reuben comes back. Mark shan't be allowed to worry you in this way if I can help it ; it is downright persecution. But you must tell me all about it, and we will see what can be done," concluded Vera, anger against Mark as well as sympathy with Janet making her forget her own happy hopes for the time.

How Janet wished she could tell Vera all about it, but this was impossible. All that concerned Mark Brown and his persecution of her she could and did tell her when they got into the cottage ; but her real sorrow, her secret marriage, this Janet dare not breathe. Even if Rex had given her leave to do so, she would hardly have ventured to break to Vera that she was her brother's wife. Such news could only be most unwelcome to Vera. Indeed she might probably refuse to have anything to say to her, for though Vera was passionately attached to Rex, and was described among all her father's parishioners as "a very nice young lady, with no pride," Janet felt there was probably a limit to Vera's sisterly devotion, and to her humility ; and she doubted whether either could stand such a shock as the news that her brother had secretly married the blacksmith's daughter.

But Rex had enjoined strict secrecy, and Janet was prepared to suffer martyrdom if necessary rather than disobey his injunctions. All she hoped and prayed was, that he would announce his marriage before she became a mother. Poor Janet ! If she could have seen into the future, even her brave spirit—and she was brave where Rex's interest was concerned—would have quailed before the fiery trial she was destined to pass through.

Reuben returned a few minutes after the two girls. The blacksmith's great frame seemed almost to fill the little room when he entered it, and at Vera's request sat down in front of the newly-kindled fire now blazing brightly, and throwing Vera's lovely girlish figure, set off by her well-fitting habit, into high relief against the white-washed wall behind her. She had taken off her hat and gloves and was sitting upright on Reuben's arm-chair, screening her beautiful face with two little white hands from the fire. Her golden

hair was somewhat disordered by her ride, and her great dark eyes sparkled with the excitement of the scene they had just witnessed, and Reuben thought he had never seen her look so pretty.

Janet's florid style of beauty with her fine figure, even though she was paler than usual, looked commonplace in the presence of Vera, who appeared like the denizen of another world. For grief and love had both set their mark on the girl's face, and Reuben dimly felt her beauty was of a superior order to Janet's.

Janet's was the beauty of form and colour only, realistic, of the Rubens type; Vera's was more. Added to delicacy of form and colour was the beauty of a soul strong to love and to suffer, of a pure spirit, idealistic, Raffaellesque. There are men in the world who would hardly have looked at Vera when Janet was near; there are others who certainly would not have looked at Janet in Vera's presence, and perhaps the last are the fewer. But Reuben, though only a blacksmith, showed his good taste and his real worth when he felt the power of Vera's beauty.

Reuben grew very grave when he heard of Mark's behaviour, which was certainly most unbecoming to so recent a convert. Vera was spokeswoman, and she pleaded Janet's cause so eloquently that the blacksmith himself suggested she should go on a visit to her aunt Norah for a few months, and professed his ability to manage without her, though he owned it would be dull work during the winter. It was finally arranged that Janet should go to Mrs. Canter in a week or ten days: and that Mark might not follow her, it should be given out she was gone to service, her real destination being kept a secret from everyone but Vera and Reuben.

On her return home, Vera went straight to her father, to give him Captain Raleigh's letter and to tell him of Mark's conduct. At first Mr. Ryot Tempest was inclined to take Mark's part, and though he allowed that playing with fire-arms was a foolish practice, he blamed Janet for not marrying his factotum, who he maintained would make a very good husband.

But when he learnt that his paragon had been guilty of such apostasy as joining the Baptists, he changed his tune, and ringing the bell, ordered Mark into his august presence, determined to give him notice. Well for him; better for Mark, and best for Vera had he done so. But Mark played the penitent so well, and confessed that though he had submitted to being dipped in a slimy pond he was at heart a churchman, that in the end the Rector relented and Mark remained at the Rectory.

Mark's anger with Vera for having reported his conduct to her father was none the less deep for being concealed under a civil manner; and when a fortnight later he heard Janet was gone out to service no one knew where, he attributed this to Vera's influence, and resolved to be revenged on her sooner or later. To her he attributed all his ill-luck, and there grew up in his heart, by the side of his love

for Janet, an almost insane hatred of his fair young mistress, who he knew despised and disliked him.

Vera was very sincere, consequently she showed her likes and dislikes very strongly, but she was quite unconscious of the hatred she had inspired in Mark's bosom, though had she known it, it would never have troubled her, for it would not have occurred to her that her father's groom could exercise any influence over her life. Yet destiny had decreed that influence should be a very remarkable one.

Vera's thoughts, however, were occupied by a far more interesting subject than Mark Brown, for Mr. Ryot Tempest's letter was to say Captain Raleigh hoped to be in the neighbourhood very shortly, and would do himself the pleasure of renewing their acquaintance.

He was true to his word, and the acquaintance very quickly ripened into friendship, for Captain Raleigh soon let it be known his object in coming to that part of the world was to be near Vera. He was staying at the only decent hotel in the nearest town, but most of his time was spent at the Rectory, or rather with Vera, with whom he rode or walked every day. At first Mr. Ryot Tempest accompanied them, but his equestrian powers were not great and their pace did not suit him; so reflecting that Captain Raleigh was one of the Raleighs, and consequently a cousin of the Ryots, he allowed Vera to accompany him without a "chaperon."

One Saturday afternoon about ten days after Captain Raleigh's arrival, he and Vera started off for a walk, while Mr. Ryot Tempest paid his usual weekly visit to Mrs. Jamieson.

It was a lovely autumn day, the trees which clothed the hillsides had lost most of their leaves; what remained were of gorgeous tints of red and yellow and gold and russet browns, varied frequently by the blue-greens of the Scotch firs, while the ground beneath them was thickly strewn with fallen leaves gleaming golden in the sunshine. A purple haze over the distant hills contrasted finely with all these golden reds, but though a great admirer of Nature in all her moods, Captain Raleigh was too much occupied with his own thoughts and with looking at Vera's graceful figure, clad in its deep mourning, to pay any heed to the scenery till she called his attention to it. He was in a languid mood to-day, for the first time since his arrival, so Vera determined to take it out of him by suggesting they should mount the opposite hill.

"We will go up behind the convent; that will be new to you."

"Not quite, I have been as far as the convent before," said Captain Raleigh, quietly.

Vera wondered rather at this, and it certainly never occurred to her that he had been to the chapel adjoining it to hear mass that very morning: for it was All Saints' Day.

"But not beyond? We will go up to the top, then, through that wood; there is a very pretty view of our church a little above the

convent ; it had need look picturesque outside, for the interior is ugly enough, as you will see to-morrow."

"I am afraid I shan't be able to do that," said Captain Raleigh, eyeing Vera sharply.

"Why not?" said Vera.

"Because I am a Catholic; didn't you know it?"

"A Catholic? Oh, dear, I am sorry," said Vera, naïvely; but the next moment she could have bitten her tongue out for saying it.

"Why are you sorry? Surely as your dear mother was a good Catholic, you can't have any prejudice against us?"

"Oh, no, it isn't that; besides, I was baptised a Catholic. Father Ambrose baptised me when I was a week old, so perhaps I shall be one myself some day, when I know more about it."

"Then tell me why you are so sorry that I am one."

Vera blushed crimson, and poked vigorously with her umbrella among the fir-needles with which the path was strewn. At last she said in a hesitating tone:

"Well, you see my father is very bigoted, and I am afraid when he hears it he won't let us have any more walks or rides together."

"And shall you mind that?" eagerly demanded Captain Raleigh.

"Yes," said Vera frankly. "I was very dull till you came, and I have enjoyed this week very much."

"So have I; so much that I wish it could last for ever. I wish we could walk and ride through life together; I have wished it ever since I sat opposite you at dinner at Avranches. Shall we do it, Vera?"

Vera trembled, for this was the first time he had called her by her christian name; but there was an element of coquetry in her nature, and she could not resist teasing him just a little.

"Well," she said demurely, "I like walking very much, and I like riding very much, but I don't think I should care to spend my whole life riding and walking. It might pall after awhile. Besides, it would be so very tiring you know."

Captain Raleigh, however, was not a man to stand teasing; he knew Vera cared for him, he knew too those lines of Heine:

Der zum ersten male liebt
Sei's auch glücklos ist ein Gott
Aber wer zum zweiten male
Glücklos liebt der ist ein Narr."

He had loved once unhappily; he had no intention of loving un-luckily a second time, and so incurring the poet's reproach of being a fool.

"You know what I mean, Vera; this is no time for trifling," he said sternly; and Vera liked him better than ever.

"I am in earnest," he went on. "I meant to have spoken to your

father first, but I can't wait any longer. Vera, I love you ; will you be my wife."

There was no languor about him now, as he seized one of Vera's hands, and bent down towards her till his face was close to hers, looking as if his very life hung on her answer.

"Papa will never consent," said Vera at last.

"And what will you do ?" said Raleigh, drawing her close.

"I don't know," whispered Vera.

The next thing of any interest to other people which occurred was, Vera's hat came off. How it happened has never transpired ; but after its loss was discovered, which was not immediately, and the hat had been re-adjusted by Captain Raleigh, which was a somewhat lengthy proceeding, the conversation assumed a less fragmentary nature than it had partaken during this little interlude.

"You love me then, Vera ?"

"I am not quite sure."

"Not sure ; what do you mean ? For heaven's sake don't play with me, Vera !"

"Well, you see, I adored my mother ; I am devoted to Rex ; I am very fond of my old nurse, Norah Canter ; my feeling for my father is what I take to be affection ; but my feeling for you is different from all these, so I suppose it must be love. If it is, I have never loved anyone before, and I never mean to love anyone again."

"Why not ?" interrupted Raleigh.

"Because it is not all plums. But on the whole I am inclined to think it is love."

Captain Raleigh inclined to the same opinion. At any rate he seemed perfectly satisfied with Vera's naïve diagnosis of her feelings, and did not consider the fact of her being by her own confession a mere tyro in the art of love any drawback to his happiness.

Slowly they climbed to the top of the hill, sublimely regardless of the artistic effects the sun wrought in the wood. In vain for them it glinted through the trees, lighting up the silvery trunks of the beeches, and kindling the leaves and mast which strewn the ground into burning red and gold ; in vain it cast long purple shadows over the distant blue hills ; in vain lit up a maple-tree here and there, till its pale golden leaves seemed luminous. Nature might be fair, but love was fairer, and some presentiment of coming trouble made them take their fill of present joy. But when they came out of the wood into a green pasture on the top of the hill, Vera could not help exclaiming :

"Look at the grass, what a lovely colour it is ; and the path looks like a rainbow."

The long grass was of that exquisite bluey-green one sometimes sees in autumn when the sun is low, while the rich madder-brown path across the field, bordered with faded grasses, was glorified by the sunlight into the faint semblance of a prism.

"It does; I hope it isn't typical of our path through life," said Raleigh.

"I hope it is, to some extent. We shall have a little rain no doubt, but if the sun be shining at the same time, I shall not mind," said Vera.

"I hope our happiness won't fade like a rainbow," replied Raleigh; "but what you have told me of your father makes me fear there is trouble in store for us."

"Not if we are true to each other," said Vera gently.

"And you will be true, my Vera, won't you?"

"Yes, Captain Raleigh."

"How dare you, Vera! Never let me hear you call me Captain Raleigh again. Oh! if we were only in that wood ——"

"What would you do?"

"Call me Captain Raleigh again and I'll show you."

"What am I to call you, then? I don't know your christian name," said Vera with assumed meekness.

"Call me Jack, my darling."

"Jack, my darling!" said Vera archly; and although they were not in the wood, still the field was empty, and she had her reward.

And then they wandered on, lost in each other, till suddenly a little man, jumping about like an indiarubber ball on a trotting pony in the valley beneath them, attracted Vera's attention.

"There goes my father. He has been to Ashchurch. The only person we know there is Mrs. Jamieson. I wonder what he has been to see her for?" said Vera.

"Jamieson—Jamieson? Who is Mrs. Jamieson?"

"She is a rich widow, with some wonderful diamonds. Her husband was double her age, and he is just dead. That is all I know about her, except I don't like her."

"I know more than that: I knew her well before her marriage."

"And do you like her?" asked Vera eagerly.

"I did, Vera. I fancied I loved her once, in my salad days. I am wiser now," said Raleigh penitently.

"I hate her; and I can't think what papa has been to see her for. We called on her not so very long ago."

"If he has mentioned me, she will prejudice him against me. But never mind, Vera, we must hope for the best; and if the worst comes to the worst, we can but wait till you are of age, and can please yourself."

"That won't be for more than a year. But I should not like to marry against my father's wishes. Tell me, Jack: were you very fond of Mrs. Jamieson?" And Vera slipped her hand through Captain Raleigh's arm and looked up into his face.

"I was, but I was an utter fool for my pains! Forgive me that folly, my little Vera."

"You are quite sure you like me better than you liked her, Jack?"

"Better, Vera! I love you better than my life! My love for her was hardly worthy the name of love."

"Then I forgive *you*, but I am very angry with her."

Poor Vera! She was destined to be still more angry, and with more cause, with Mrs. Jamieson before very long. Meanwhile, the lovers sauntered slowly home, all unconscious of the storm which was to meet them on their return.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. RYOT TEMPEST IS DEFIED.

GRIEF had not made any serious ravages on Mrs. Jamieson's countenance. Its outward and visible signs were yet further diminished on that Saturday afternoon when Captain Raleigh was asking Vera to be his wife. Three months had elapsed since Mr. Jamieson departed this life, and his widow seized the first decent opportunity of discarding the weepers, widow's caps and collars, those orthodox symbols of woe, all of which had been thorns in the flesh to her. Mr. Ryot Tempest was not sufficiently versed in the science of feminine attire to know what precise alterations had taken place in Mrs. Jamieson's dress since he last saw her; the masculine mind rarely descends to details. All he knew was that the general effect was pleasing, and his friend looked younger and handsomer than ever.

Their friendship had made great strides within the last two months, and they were now on very intimate terms—so intimate that they did not feel obliged to talk for the mere sake of saying something. Mrs. Jamieson understood to a nicety how to make a man comfortable; in fact, she understood the superior sex thoroughly. She had made it her study from her youth up; she knew its strong points and its weak, its virtues and its vices. Above all, she knew its most vulnerable spot.

"Please make yourself quite at home. I can't let you smoke in this room, for fear of Mrs. Grundy and other visitors; but if you would like a pipe, we will go into the library," she said, when Mr. Tempest arrived.

"Thanks; I don't smoke," said Mr. Ryot Tempest.

Mrs. Jamieson gave a sigh of relief, for in point of fact the smell of smoke was most disagreeable to her; but she was one of those women who will patiently endure the fumes of tobacco for the sake of masculine society.

"Sit still and rest in your special chair, then," she said, wheeling a luxurious arm-chair up to the brightly burning fire, and taking up some knitting, which served a double purpose. The red wool made her pretty hands look whiter than ever, and also enabled her to pose as a Dorcas, as the result of her labour was destined, when finished by her maid, to adorn the shoulders of some poor woman.

"I feel quite proud of myself to-day. I have been to church, being All Saints' Day; and I have just taken a wreath up to poor Mr. Jamieson's grave. I am spared the trial you have to bear, of having your dear one buried in a foreign land. It is such a solace to be able to visit the grave of all one holds dearest whenever one feels inclined."

She was certainly a most charming woman, thought Mr. Ryot Tempest; so full of tender feeling for her lost husband; so delicately sympathetic with him in all his sorrow. She seemed to enter into all the details with such fine feeling, and she exercised such exquisite tact in expressing it. How strange that Vera should be blind to such feminine perfections! Her dislike to Mrs. Jamieson could certainly only be attributed to one source—jealousy.

"You are looking fagged; I am afraid you have been doing too much lately," said Mrs. Jamieson compassionately.

"Not more than usual," replied Mr. Tempest, as if he were the busiest man in the world, instead of a very idle one. "But the fact is, I have been very much alone this week."

"Ah! that loneliness, how sad it is. I know so well what you are suffering, my dear friend. How strange it is that the same cross should be laid upon us both, and yet we are so unlike; you the learned scholar, I the weak, ignorant woman."

"Not ignorant," said Mr. Tempest, gloating over the word scholar, for nothing pleased him so well as to be thought learned.

"Yes, ignorant by comparison with you," sweetly insisted Mrs. Jamieson. "But how is Vera?"

"Very well, and I think I may add, very happy."

"Ah! the young have the advantage over us elder ones: they soon forget."

"The truth is, a gentleman we met while we were at Avranches, and whose acquaintance we made under somewhat romantic circumstances, is now staying in the neighbourhood, and we have seen a good deal of him since he came."

"I understand; and would it be a desirable match?"

"Quite so; he is a man of very good family, and that is the first consideration. In point of fact, he is a connection of the Ryots, so we became intimate very quickly. He is in the —th; has just got his company and is home from India for a year on sick-leave. He is a man of some means, and a very charming, gentlemanly fellow."

"This is most interesting; I delight in anything in the shape of a love-affair. Do tell me more," exclaimed Mrs. Jamieson.

"There is no more to tell just at present, except that I have felt rather de trop lately."

"Ah! lovers are selfish creatures. I am sure it must be very lonely for you; you should come and see me oftener. And may I ask the name of the hero of this charming little story?"

"Captain Raleigh."

Mrs. Jamieson started and turned a shade or two paler as she repeated:

"Raleigh? Jack Raleigh? One of the Norfolk Raleighs?"

"The same. Do you know him?"

"Well. So well that I am amazed to hear he has been in this neighbourhood some days without paying me a visit. I knew him before I married."

She did not add that she, though Captain Raleigh's senior by seven or eight years, had flirted with him mercilessly, and then, luckily for him, had thrown him aside for the wealthier Mr. Jamieson. But while Mr. Tempest was uttering some commonplaces about the smallness of the world, Mrs. Jamieson was debating inwardly whether she should cry check to Vera's king or allow the game to go on a little longer. In the end, the temptation to interfere at once proved too strong for her. Much as she wished Vera to marry and relieve her of the duties of a step-mother, for which she felt she had no vocation, she could not bear to see herself supplanted in the affections of an old lover by a mere child, as she scornfully denominated Vera. So she resolved to speak.

"Of course you know Captain Raleigh is a Romanist?" she remarked in her sweetest tones.

"Indeed I know nothing of the kind. Surely you must be mistaken?"

"I fear not. His branch of the Raleighs are all Romanists, and always have been."

"Dear me, dear me! this is terrible news! I had no idea of it. Of course that will put an end to the matter at once. Nothing would induce me to allow Vera to marry a Catholic. It might seriously affect my position in the county, and it would certainly defeat all my hopes of obtaining any valuable preferment. Moreover, my conscience really would not allow me to countenance such a thing for a moment, though I fear you will think me very inconsistent to say so."

"Not at all. One sees things so differently when one is young. And though I was able to resist the very same temptation when I was a girl, I can so completely sympathise with the sacrifice of worldly prospects you so generously made. May I say I admire you so much for it?"

Mrs. Jamieson was treading on dangerous ground, and she knew it; but nothing venture nothing have; so to accent her speech she laid one white little hand gently on Mr. Tempest's arm just for a few seconds.

He coughed and coloured, and made a little deprecating gesture as he answered nervously:

"Thanks, my dear friend. And what would you advise me to do in this matter?"

"Put an end to it at once; cut the knot; don't attempt to untie it. The sooner it is done the better, for Vera's sake, poor child; she will sadly need a woman's sympathy. You men are very clever, but you don't understand us poor women in these affairs."

"If Vera would only confide in you," said Mr. Ryot Tempest, knowing that Vera was as likely to confide in Mark Brown as in Mrs. Jamieson.

"We must have patience; perhaps some day she will."

Mr. Ryot Tempest sighed, and soon after departed in a very restless mood. He would have given much to have read the feelings of his bereaved friend with regard to him; she would have given more to know the state of his feelings towards her. We are fortunately in a position to know both.

Mrs. Jamieson moved to the pier-glass when her visitor had departed, and gazed critically at herself. "I am handsome even in this trying crape. If I could but meet him in the evening—I always was a candlelight beauty—one evening in my black velvet and diamonds would finish him," she thought, as she gazed complacently at her good-looking person.

"Happy thought! I'll ask him to dinner," she muttered half aloud after a little pause. "Why didn't I think of it before? He'll come because the girl will want rousing after her lover has gone. Meanwhile I'll write to the bishop, and make him promise the next archdeaconry to my little friend. He will make a very good archdeacon and an excellent husband."

Then she peered closer at herself, and the scrutiny was satisfactory, for she added with a little thrill of pleasure: "The lines under my eyes are less marked than they were; Mr. Jamieson's temper made them. Ah, well! he is at rest—and so am I."

Meanwhile Mr. Ryot Tempest was trotting home, his little pulses beating fast as he bumped about on his pony, occasionally muttering to himself: "A fine figure, a very fine figure; and a charming woman."

He was much exercised about Vera and Captain Raleigh, and was by no means reckoning on his interview with them. He was disappointed, too, for he liked Captain Raleigh personally, and would have liked the connection; but nothing should induce him to let Vera marry a Catholic. But the image of Mrs. Jamieson kept blotting all other thoughts out of his mind, save that ever-recurring one: "A fine figure, a very fine figure."

"Is Miss Vera in the house, Mary?" was his first question on reaching home.

"No, sir; she is out with Captain Raleigh," said Mary.

"Very good; tell her I want her in my study as soon as she comes in."

Mary left the room outwardly unmoved, inwardly boiling with indignation.

"Cook, would you believe it? The master is going to have a finger in Miss Vera and the Captain's pie, as soon as they come home," she said, on reaching the kitchen, painful memories of "no followers allowed" inspiring her with sympathy.

"If I was the Captain, then, I'd chop his finger off with my sword," said Cook, mixing her metaphors and a pudding simultaneously, and brandishing a spoon in an alarming fashion.

"If I was cook and parlour-maid, I'd mind my own business, and not interfere with my master's," said a voice from the scullery, where Mark Brown was brushing his master's clothes.

"If I was a Baptist, I would not go to church on Sundays for all the masters and Tempests in the world," retorted Cook.

"And if I was in love with anyone who disappeared like some I know has, I'd find out where they were gone to. There is my bell; that is the Captain and Miss Vera," cried Mary.

While these compliments were being exchanged in the kitchen, Mr. Ryot Tempest was nervously awaiting Vera's return. Presently he heard her and Captain Raleigh come in, and a minute or so later there was a knock at his study-door.

"Come in, my dear," said the Rector, expecting to see Vera; but to his vexation it was Captain Raleigh, who with his most languid air entered the study and closed the door.

The interview was not a long one, though to Vera, who was eagerly awaiting the issue, it seemed interminable.

Captain Raleigh opened the battle at once.

"Mr. Ryot Tempest, I have come to ask your consent to my engagement with your daughter. Perhaps I ought to have spoken to you first, and I intended to have done so, but, as sometimes happens in similar cases, I could not wait."

"You—you have taken me rather by surprise, Captain Raleigh. But before I reply, allow me to ask you a question: Are you a member of that Church which I conceive to be an Italian mission set up in this country?"

"If you allude to the Roman Catholic Church, I am," said Captain Raleigh with a slight smile.

"Then, in that case, I cannot consent to your engagement with Vera. In fact, I must request that all intercourse between you shall cease from this day; except on one condition, which would, of course, alter my decision, for I need scarcely say I have no other objection to you."

"And that condition?" said Captain Raleigh quietly.

"That you become a Protestant. I shall be happy——"

"Heaven forbid!" shouted Captain Raleigh in a tone which made Mr. Tempest start, and as he spoke his pale face grew paler, his dark, sleepy eyes flashed fire, and he changed the somewhat listless attitude he had assumed. Now he stood upright, as though about to lead his company into the thick of the battle, and Mr. Ryot

Tempest felt that whatever else he might be, he was a brave man and a good soldier.

"Sir, I love your daughter with my whole heart, but I love my God with my whole soul and my Church with my whole mind ; so we will have no talk of apostasy, if you please," concluded the Captain, unconsciously parodying a remark of a celebrated Frenchman.

"I—I was only about to say that I should be happy to go into the question with you."

"Thank you ; I fear that the result would hardly be satisfactory from your point of view if we did so. Am I then to understand you desire my engagement with your daughter—indeed, our acquaintance—to cease ?"

"If you please. I regret it sincerely, but my conscience tells me it is the best, indeed, the only course."

"Very good, sir. As long as Miss Ryot Tempest remains a minor I bow to your decision, and I give you my word as an officer and a gentleman to hold no communication with her from this day till her twenty-first birthday, unknown to you. On that happy day I shall, with your daughter's permission, renew my offer, which I trust will then terminate in our marriage. I may add that Miss Tempest entirely shares my views and intentions in this matter."

"Sir," said Mr. Tempest with his most dignified air, which was singularly suggestive of a cock-robin, "the mere fact of attaining her twenty-first birthday does not, in my opinion, release my daughter from the obedience she owes her only surviving parent. My objection to her marriage with you will be as strong when she is twenty-one as it is now, and I have no reason to suppose that she will disregard my wishes and commands. So do not allow yourself to be buoyed up with any false hopes."

"I have no fears on that score ; but we will discuss the matter further when Vera comes of age. I will now, with your permission, say good-bye to her before I leave, and I trust that though this interview has been a very painful one for us both, we are parting on friendly terms."

"Captain Raleigh, you have been frank with me and I will be the same with you, and I tell you plainly I shall take every step in my power to hinder your union with my daughter, and that solely on account of your religious views."

"I understand perfectly, and I wish you good-day," said Captain Raleigh with a calm assurance that irritated Mr. Tempest, for it warned him he must expect strong opposition from Vera. He sat inwardly shrinking from an interview with her, when the door opened and that young person stood before him pale and determined.

Mr. Ryot Tempest had seen his daughter in a pet ; he had seen her wilful and naughty ; he had seen her wild with grief at the time of her mother's death, but he had never seen her as she now looked.

She seemed to have grown suddenly from a wilful child to a woman, brave, determined, capable of enduring, and resolved to suffer if need be. Her beautiful face would have been hard but for the soft look which lightened her lovely eyes and told her father more eloquently than any words that her heart was already in someone else's keeping.

"Father, Captain Raleigh has told me you have refused your consent to our engagement, and that he has promised not to see or write to me without your consent till I am of age."

"Yes, my dear; Captain Raleigh has so far behaved very properly; it is what he proposes to do when you are twenty-one that I take exception to; no doubt though, then, if you do not now, you will see there was no other course for me to pursue."

"Papa, I never shall. I consider your decision most unjust——"

"Vera, such language is most unbecoming a child to her parent," interrupted Mr. Tempest, nervously.

"I can't help it; I must say it. My mother was a Catholic, and I was baptised by Father Ambrose into the same church; so it is unjust to separate us on religious grounds," cried Vera, breathing quickly, her little white hands trembling with excitement.

"Vera, you amaze me; you are forgetting yourself strangely," said Mr. Tempest, crossing his little legs and beating the devil's tattoo on the elbow of his chair.

"I don't think I am, but I must say it all the same. I hate injustice. Here a bright blush mantled Vera's cheek and she dropped her eyes for a moment, but raised them and looked full in her father's face as she continued:

"I love Captain Raleigh. I should not like to marry him in defiance of you, but you must not try me too far. If I do not marry him I will never marry anyone else in this world."

Mr. Ryot Tempest sprang to his feet when his daughter thus threw down the gauntlet, and, losing his temper, exclaimed irritably:

"Leave the room, Vera."

"I am going, papa; I only wish you to understand that as I am still a minor I will obey you so far that I will neither see nor write to Captain Raleigh until I am twenty-one. After that I will make no promise."

Having thus delivered herself, Miss Ryot Tempest left the study with much dignity, but on reaching the drawing-room, where Captain Raleigh was awaiting her, her dignity forsook her, and she threw herself sobbing wildly into her lover's arms.

There for the present we will leave her, feeling sure that neither she nor Captain Raleigh would object to the arrangement.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. CANTER ENTERTAINS AN UNWELCOME GUEST.

"THIS is a queer world, Cook," said Mary.

"It isn't the world, it is the folks who are in it ; but what is the matter now ?" said Cook.

"What is the matter ? Why, master, to be sure ; it is all his doing ; sending Miss Vera's Captain off like this ! And now he has dragged her out to dinner to-night, and she'd far rather have been at home."

"How do you know ?"

"Know ? Why, I dressed her, and beautiful she looked for all her deep mourning ; but she was that pale and her eyes that mournful, I could not bear to see her ; and she never so much as looked at herself in the glass."

"Poor young lady ! I suppose she don't care how she looks now there is no Captain to look at her," said Cook, sympathetically.

"I do feel for her, for I know how I should feel if my Jim was parted from me ; I almost hate master, that I do."

"More shame on you, then," exclaimed Mark, who came in to the kitchen in time to hear this last remark.

"None of your impertinence, Mark, please ; you have driven Janet Foreman away from Woodford with your folly, but you don't drive me from the Rectory, I can tell you. I mean to stay and take care of Miss Vera, whether you tell tales of me—as you are always doing—to the master or not," said Mary, tossing her head.

"That is a queer business about Janet Foreman ; I wonder you don't find out where she is gone, Mark ; you were crazy after her when she was here," said Cook.

"Perhaps I know," said Mark, sulkily ; but not all the flattery Mary condescended to bestow upon him, nor the hot supper of fried pork and onions—his favourite dish—to which Cook treated him, could induce him to say another syllable on the subject of Janet.

The truth was all his inquiries had hitherto been in vain ; no one in Woodford but Reuben and Vera knew where Janet was, and Reuben was very reticent whenever Mark broached the subject. Mark believed Janet was in service, but where he did not know, and he saw at present no chance of discovering ; but the taunts of the maidservants annoyed him, so he took refuge in pretending to have found her out. Strange to say, it had not at present occurred to him to suspect she had gone to Mrs. Canter's, but if once that idea struck him, he would undoubtedly pursue his prey.

While Vera's affairs and Janet's disappearance were being discussed in the Rectory kitchen, Mrs. Jamieson was entertaining Vera and her father and the curate of the parish at dinner. Mrs. Jamieson looked handsomer than ever in a black velvet dress, with her celebrated diamonds in her hair and on her neck, and she did her best to fas-

ciate Vera, who, however, was not inclined to be fascinated or fascinating. The curate, who was nothing if not ritualistic, bored her; he arrived at Mrs. Jamieson's house full of the union of his own Church with the "Great Western branch," meaning the Roman Catholic Church, but Vera cooled his zeal in this direction by saying shortly, "I am not interested in railways." His conversation then ran on vestments, coloured stoles and the eastward position, and had no interest for her, while the sacerdotal airs he was pleased to assume so irritated her that she privately longed to box his ears. As this longing was not one that could be gratified, she took refuge in the piano when they re-entered the drawing-room, and so charmed the curate, who was musical, by her singing, that he went home determined to reconsider prayerfully the question of the celibacy of the clergy, of which he had hitherto been a fervid advocate, and inclined to desire a union with Vera even more ardently than he longed for the union of Christendom.

If Vera refused to be fascinated by Mrs. Jamieson, her father was less obdurate, and as he sank back in the fly which conveyed him and Vera home, he exclaimed admiringly:

"A magnificent woman!"

"I beg your pardon, papa?" said Vera, shortly.

"I—I merely remarked what a very handsome woman Mrs. Jamieson is," said Mr. Ryot Tempest, nervously.

"Very handsome, but what shocking taste to appear out of mourning when her husband has only been dead three or four months."

"Out of mourning! my dear Vera. Why, she was in black."

"Black velvet is not mourning, neither are diamonds, except at Court, when ordered."

This was a matter on which Mr. Ryot Tempest conceived the feminine mind more capable of pronouncing judgment than he was, so he did not contradict his daughter, with whom he desired to keep on good terms. For a reconciliation had taken place between them the day after Captain Raleigh's departure. Vera's conscience told her she had not been as respectful as she ought to have been to her father during their interview, so she made the "amende honorable," and they then agreed the subject should not be mentioned any more between them till her twenty-first birthday. Vera bore the separation from Captain Raleigh bravely at first; the joy of loving and being loved was still a new experience; but as time wore on, and Christmas drew near, her courage began to flag, and her letters to Norah Canter, who was her confidante, grew longer and more frequent. Norah feared this new trouble would tell on her darling's health, and wrote to Rex, begging him to use all the influence he possessed with his father to induce him to consent to the engagement.

On Christmas day, Vera's flagging spirits rose to a high level, for Captain Raleigh sent an exquisite bouquet and a large packet of songs to her, under cover to her father, with a note, hoping Mr. Ryot Tempest would permit Vera to accept them, since flowers and music were

admissible gifts when no engagement existed. Mr. Ryot Tempest allowed Vera to have them, and although he declined to let her write and acknowledge them, he nevertheless promised to do so himself. And he kept his promise.

A day or two after Christmas, Mark Brown happened to be in the post-office when the letters were being stamped, and his quick eye caught sight of one in Reuben's handwriting, directed to Norah Canter. In an instant it flashed into Mark's mind that Janet was with her aunt, and the next moment he had decided to ask for a holiday, and go over to Marling. As he left the post-office, however, it began to snow, and by the next morning the snow was so deep that he knew until the thaw set in he could not be spared from the Rectory for a whole day; so he was obliged to wait and watch the weather as patiently as he could.

The elements apparently were against him, for the snow lasted a month, and it was the end of January before Mark could attempt to get to Marling. But he had had plenty of time to lay his plans so well, that he had now no fear lest they should be thwarted by Vera, who, if she knew he was going out for the day, might suspect where he was going, and write and warn Janet. Accordingly, it was not till the post was in on the day Mark proposed going to Marling, that he asked his master if he could kindly spare him for the day, as he had had a letter that morning from a sister who was dying and wished to see him.

"Where is Mark, papa? I want Firefly saddled at once," said Vera, about ten o'clock that morning.

"Gone out for the day, my dear, to see his sister who is dying."

"His sister? Why, he hasn't a sister; he is an only child, and a bad one too. Never mind; the boy and I between us can manage Firefly, I daresay," returned Vera, who instantly suspected where Mark was gone, and as quickly decided to do her best to prevent his finding Janet.

She was soon mounted on Firefly, and rode off to Ashchurch to telegraph to Norah, telling her Mark Brown was on his way to Marling; this she discovered for a fact at the station, where she also found out that it was a nice question which would arrive first, Mark Brown or her telegram.

It was a Monday, and Monday being no longer washing-day, owing to the unprecedented obstinacy of the Marling people, Mrs. Canter's time hung heavily on her hands, and on Mondays her hand frequently fell heavily on the little Canthers, for her temper was apt to be easily ruffled on these occasions. The world was turned topsy-turvy by these good people, whom Norah scornfully designated fools, and the little Canthers were turned topsy-turvy by their mother, who avenged her wrongs on their innocent little bodies on the slightest provocation, till they wished with all their little hearts Monday was still washing-day, and the world and themselves allowed to maintain their normal positions.

Alas ! In this unregenerate world in these degenerate days this wish was not likely to be fulfilled, but Mrs. Canter took care that if the Marling people did not know, as she averred, whether they were standing on their heads or their heels, the little Canthers should know to their cost which end of their little persons was uppermost. Perhaps this was a precautionary measure taken lest they should dare to grow up with any revolutionary ideas on the subject of washing day. Perhaps it was only a vent for the righteous indignation Mrs. Canter felt with the world in general, and the Marling world in particular. There was some excuse for her irascibility just now ; she was troubled about many things : especially about Vera and her engagement. Then rumours had reached her of Mr. Ryot Tempest's intimacy with Mrs. Jamieson and its probable consequences, which, for Vera's sake, she deeply deplored. And last but not least, she was most anxious about Janet, who was shortly expecting to become a mother, and who was still urged by Rex to keep her marriage a secret until he had received the second sum of money from his father, which would not be for another six months.

"It isn't fair to you, Janet," said Mrs. Canter on this particular Monday morning, as she and Janet sat working over the fire.

"I don't mind so long as Rex wishes it kept secret," said Janet.

"But I do. Why, any day your father might pop in here upon us, and it would just drive him out of his mind, unless you were to tell him the truth."

"I could not. I would rather father killed me than break my promise to Rex."

"Don't be a fool, Janet ! I haven't patience to hear you. One would suppose Master Rex was a god. Law, bless me, girl ! he is naught but a man, after all ; and the very best of them are poor things compared to a woman who never made a fool of herself about one. But there, you might go from here to Australia and not come across two women who had not gone silly about a man some time in their lives. What they all find in a man to turn their heads beats me ; for my part, I never saw much to admire in any of them."

"Oh, Aunt Norah, how can you say so ! Why, I know you think my Rex is perfect."

"I think you'll soon spoil him if he is, if you mean to give in to him in everything. A happier couple than Canter and I never lived, and why ? Because I never gave in to him in my life, so he never expected it. Who's that, I wonder ? I'll go, Janet," said Norah, rising to open the door in answer to a knock.

It was Vera's telegram. Mrs. Canter hastily tore open the envelope, and read as follows :—

"Mark will be with you soon after twelve to-day. Hope this will arrive first."

"And it is gone twelve. Here, read it, Janet. What are we to do ?"

Janet read the telegram, and rising hastily said: "Oh, Aunt Norah, we can never keep it from him! I'll go upstairs and hide there; but the children—they are sure to let it out."

"Not if I know it! You leave them to me; I'll settle them. Make a fire upstairs, and I'll send you up some dinner. I must keep him here, or he'll get gossiping in the village."

"Mother, there is a telegram been sent to you. I met the girl, and she told me. Who is it from?" exclaimed Mary Jane, bursting in from the garden with the baby, which she had been airing, in her arms.

"My word, my lady! I'll teach you to ask questions. Give me that baby, and you take that, and take yourself upstairs till I send for you. Just let me hear a sound from you, and you'll remember it till your dying day."

"That" was a box on the ears, skilfully dodged by Mary Jane, who retired whimpering upstairs, where she was amazed and comforted to find Janet was to share her banishment, but too fearful of the consequences to indulge her curiosity by inquiring into the cause of her cousin's exile.

Mary Jane being thus summarily disposed of, there remained three boys to be silenced. The baby and the idiot boy could not talk, so they escaped scot-free. The boys were expected in from school every minute, and Mrs. Canter went to her garden gate to look for them. There they were, half-way up the lane, playing marbles; and there, a little way behind them, was Mark Brown. If he overtook them, Janet's hiding-place would be known.

"The young rascals! I'll teach them to play marbles in this thaw," said Mrs. Canter, picking up her dress and putting the skirt over her head so as to form a hood. She ran to meet her sons, shouting to them as she went. The boys heard her, picked up their marbles, and flew past her into the house, knowing what to expect on Monday morning, but unconscious that the presence of Mark Brown in their rear had added to the enormity of their offence, or at least to its consequences.

Mrs. Canter caught Jack, the youngest of the three, as he tried to slip past her, and lifting him up she tucked his curly head under her arm, and settled with him on her way to the house, where she seated him howling on a chair by the wall; and seizing his brothers in turn, made them regret for a few minutes that marbles had ever been invented.

"There! perhaps you'll come home from school straight to-morrow. And now there is a gentleman coming to dinner, and if one of you dares to utter one word—mind, one word—from the time he enters the house till the time he leaves it, you'll never forget it as long as you live! And you don't one of you move till your dinner is ready."

The trio, howling in chorus, were seated in a row by the wall, and

Mrs. Canter had scarcely finished speaking when Mark Brown knocked at the door, whereupon the howls subsided into sobs.

"Law, Mark, what a start you have given me! Who'd have thought of seeing you? Come in and get a good warm, while I see after the dinner. I am rather late to-day, but I have had such a trouble with the children: those three there are all in disgrace. Don't you even look at them, Mark, please; I have just been chastising them, and Mary Jane is as bad: she is getting to a masterful age, so I have sent her up to her bedroom. And what news do you bring from Woodford?"

As Mrs. Canter talked, she was busying herself about the dinner; and Mark being very hungry, and finding he was to be treated to liver and bacon, endeavoured to hide the disappointment he felt at not finding Janet.

While the liver was frying, Mark regaled his hostess with the Woodford news. There wasn't much. Miss Vera's love-affair he supposed rightly Norah knew of; folks did say his master was going to marry again, but he did not know how true it was; leastways Miss Vera knew nothing about it he was sure; and having thoroughly discussed his master's affairs, Mark descended to village gossip as he ate his dinner.

"Reuben is very dull now Janet has gone away," said Mark at last, hoping to get some news of her whereabouts out of Mrs. Canter.

"Ah, I am afraid he is, but Woodford was too cold for Janet; she isn't very strong."

"And where is she gone to? Nobody seems to know," said Mark.

"That is more than I can tell you," replied Mrs. Canter.

"Mother, Cousin Janet must ——" began Jack, forgetful of his mother's warning, in his anxiety to inform her and their guest of Janet's probable hiding-place.

"Oh, you will, will you? Come with me," said Mrs. Canter, seizing little Jack by one arm and transferring him and his plate to the laundry, Jack sobbing and begging for mercy as he went.

"There, don't cry any more; stay and eat your dinner here like a good boy, and I'll forgive you this time as long as you forgot," said Mrs. Canter, who was really a fond if a strict mother. And leaving Jack, who was her favourite child, by the copper fire, she returned to keep watch over the other boys.

In her brief absence Mark had discovered Janet's hat hanging on a peg just inside the laundry, which opened out of the kitchen. Norah had forgotten it was there till she saw by Mark's face he had recognised it, but she was equal to the occasion, and took the bull by the horns.

"That Mary Jane, what a tiresome child she is! Here's her hat hanging up in the laundry. It used to be Janet's, but she is very

kind to my children, and gives them many of her old things." And so saying Norah brought the hat into the kitchen, and Mark's suspicions were once more laid to rest.

"What train did you think of going back by?"

"There is one at four; I'll go by that," said Mark.

"Well, if you like, I'll go for a walk with you as soon as I have packed the children off to school; Monday is a lost day with me here," said Mrs. Canter.

"Is business slack, then?" asked Mark.

"Bless you, no; I have double the work here I had at Woodford. I shall have two washerwomen at work all to-morrow, and the two together won't get through as much as I shall; but the folks here have town ways—dirty ways, too, I call them. I never get the linen till Monday evening, here."

Once on this topic, Mrs. Canter never knew when to stop; she interrupted herself to send the children to school, Mary Jane in Janet's hat, and she resumed the subject again as she showed Mark the lions of Marling, which consisted of the church, some ruins and the village street. Her sole object in imposing this uncongenial work of lionising Mark upon herself was to prevent him from holding any conversation with the villagers, and so discovering she had a beautiful young married woman, whose husband was in Australia, living with her, whom, in spite of Janet's assumed name, Mark would no doubt recognise as Janet.

The afternoon seemed interminable to Mrs. Canter, who was longing to get Mark safely out of Marling, and glad indeed was she when it was time to go to the station. She waited to see Mark into a carriage, and then took leave of him and hurried home. On her way back she met Mary Jane and the boys coming out of school, and feeling she had been unduly severe in the morning making them suffer for Mark's persistence, she took them into the baker's and bought some scones for tea, laden with which they all returned rejoicing to Janet: Norah rejoicing because she had, as she flattered herself, so successfully baffled Mark Brown, the children because they were once more restored to favour. Mrs. Canter's temper had this recommendation: though alarming while it lasted, it always left her gentle and happy; like a thunderstorm, it cleared the air.

"He is gone, Janet, and a harder day's work I have seldom done—washing is play to it; what with walking and talking, I am tired out. Come down and let us have tea," said Norah on her return.

"Mother," cried Mary Jane from the kitchen, "they have only given us six scones for sixpence; shall I run back and tell them we always have seven?"

"Yes, if you like, but make haste back and don't stop to speak to anyone; be quick now."

"Does Mark suspect I am here?" asked Janet as she followed her aunt downstairs.

"He did, or he would not have come. It wasn't love of me, you may be sure, brought him over to Marling, but I think he has gone back as wise as he came. But if it hadn't been for Miss Vera, Janet, he would have come in and caught you here, as sure as my name is Canter. My word, you've had a narrow escape to-day; I felt so nervous I could scarcely touch a mouthful of dinner."

"Nor could I; I was thinking so of Mark."

"And he was thinking of you. He is desperately fond of you, Janet; he won't get over it in a hurry, either. Love is like small-pox: if you have it badly, it marks you for life."

"Did he say anything about father?"

"Only that he was very well, and missed you very much. I think I must go over for a few days and see your father, or we shall have him over here next," said Mrs. Canter.

Janet burst into tears, and, leaning her beautiful head on the table, sobbed out:

"I feel like some hunted animal. I live in daily dread of being seen, even by my own dear father. How I wish Rex would let me tell him!"

"Cousin Janet, have you been naughty to-day, as well as all of us?" asked little Jack, nestling up to his cousin.

"No, Janet isn't naughty, Jack. What made you think she was?" asked his mother.

"'Cause she is crying, and 'cause she had her dinner upstairs with Mary Jane."

Here the return of Mary Jane, jubilant with the success of her walk, interrupted the conversation, for she possessed more than her share of that vice generally but erroneously supposed to be peculiar to her sex—curiosity, which Mark Brown's visit had greatly excited; and she brought with her, in addition to the seventh scone, a piece of news that disturbed the sense of relief which her mother and cousin were congratulating themselves upon feeling.

"Mother, Mark Brown isn't gone home yet; I saw him in the village just now."

"Don't talk nonsense, Mary Jane, when your own mother saw him safe in the train. You have made a mistake," said Mrs. Canter.

"No, I haven't. There is no one like him in Marling," persisted Mary Jane.

"You didn't dare to speak one word to him, I hope?" said Norah, in an awful voice.

"No," said the child; and Norah, though half-doubting her first statement, knew the last was correct; for Mary Jane was truthful.

She was also right in her report; for Mark Brown didn't leave Marling by the four o'clock train that day after all.

(To be continued.)

FISH CATCHING ON THE DOGGER.

“WHAT cheer, O? How are ye, sir? I’ve jest a got ’ome from the dreery Dowger,” was the unconventional salutation addressed to an inexperienced landsman, who loved the streets of the Metropolis better than the wind-swept sea (just as Charles Lamb, in his day, preferred the lamplit thoroughfares of London to the most charming country scenery), and who, until then, had never even heard of the “Dowger,” dreary or otherwise.

The Dogger, as it is called by ordinary folks: “Dawger” or “Dowger,” as it is variously pronounced by the deep-sea trawlers: is a great submarine sandbank in the German Ocean. It is about three hundred miles from the mouth of the Thames, seventy miles from the coast of Jutland, lying within the latitudes of 55 and 56, and extending about a hundred and seventy miles in length from North to South, by sixty-five miles in breadth from East to West. It is not the only fishing-ground frequented by the deep-sea fisherman. There are others in the same mid-sea; such as the “Silver pits,” and the “Botney gut;” but the main sphere of operations is undoubtedly the great sandbank known as the Dogger.

The waters which wash the Dogger are, in their very best moods, by no means of the most placable order.

Even in the heart of summer: when, perchance, the sun has been shining for sixteen or seventeen hours in the unclouded sky, and the surface of the ocean has been outspread like a glittering sheet of transparent blue: suddenly the great rush of waters which sweep round the north-eastern tail of the Dogger may be set in motion. Ere the darkness of the brief summer night has come down, the strong nor-easter in its fury may have smitten the waves and sent them careering, as the seamen say, “mountains high,” causing the great fleet of fishing vessels to scatter in all directions, dancing and bobbing on the face of the ocean like a vast multitude of floats on the rolling waters.

And if such things happen in the warm and smiling summer, what shall be said of the boisterous autumn and the rugged winter; when the rigging of the little vessels which ply on the Dogger is oft-times one mass of ice, and the tackle cannot be made use of until the frost, by which it has been congealed, is dissipated by plenteous libations of boiling water?

Then, indeed, the surface of the Dogger is too frequently a scene of storm, toil and disaster, such as may, indeed, be equalled on other seas, but cannot well be exceeded in respect of the fury of the elements which are at play, and the heroism of the human beings who are exposed to the buffeting of the pitiless storm.

The Dogger Bank is thus the main fishing ground of the deep-sea trawlers, a class of men of whose very existence hundreds and thousands of the English people are entirely ignorant, notwithstanding the fact that they almost daily share in the fruits of their arduous labours. Yet, on that weird North Sea, some ten to fifteen thousand men and youths are busily engaged through "summer's heat and winter's snow," in all weathers and at all hours, in securing what is, after all, but a very inadequate return for their spell of weary toil by day, and their lonely watch in the darksome night, when the wind shrieks in the shrouds and the boisterous waves rage unceasingly around the tiny fishing craft.

Truly there is little of comfort or ease in the trawler's life at sea.

What sort of a personage is this deep-sea fish-catcher?

In reply it can be said that he is decidedly superior to his brother fisherman whose exertions are confined to the waters which wash the shores of Great Britain. His wits are quicker, his phraseology more picturesque, his manner more free and his spirits more boisterous. It would perhaps be erroneous to say that he is possessed of higher skill in his craft, but his powers of endurance are greater; and, accustomed as he is to more deadly and imminent danger, his heroism is tried and proven to a wider extent.

In appearance he need not fear comparison with any other class of seafaring Englishmen. If he should chance to be short of stature, he is certain to be muscular and firmly knit together; if, as is more usually the case, he is a man of powerful build, it will be found that he is remarkably well-proportioned, broad-chested, erect, supple, and possessing a voice whose hearty "What cheer, O, what cheer?" may be heard with ease in a far distant fishing smack, loud and clear above the clamour of the waves.

His life is filled up with eight weeks' unceasing labour in the German Ocean (sometimes only seventy miles from land, but more commonly at a distance of 250 or 300 miles) and one week's rest at home, during which his vessel is refitted and undergoes necessary repairs. Thus, for some fifty days only, in the whole year, is he to be found in his habitation ashore—at Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Hull or Grimsby—and for the remainder of the three hundred and sixty five, his home is on the water, in the dismal cabin of his fishing smack.

In former years the deep-sea trawler was, like the breakers by which he is buffeted, a wild and reckless fellow. He was ignorant, except of the technicalities of his craft; he was drunken; he was cut off from all the amenities of true social life; his highest enjoyment consisted in a "spree" on the foreign *coper* at sea, or a prolonged drinking bout in a wretched alehouse ashore.

There is now, however, strong and conclusive evidence that a decided change has come over the character of the deep-sea trawlers. They are spoken of as, in the main, pious, upright, gentle, peaceable

citizens ; as good in all relations of life as men who abstain from returning evil for evil ; and, indeed, if their most enthusiastic admirers can be credited, they are notable specimens of moral and spiritual excellence.

And for this marvellous change which has come over the deep-sea fisherman's character, let honour be given to whom honour is due.

A stranger in any of these floating towns on the North Sea will readily discover the pioneer of social and moral reformation amongst the trawlers, in a certain vessel which cruises with the fleets and is not merely a religious centre, but also a free hospital for injured smacksmen, the storehouse of much miscellaneous literature, and a general rendezvous for the hearty seamen who delight in the joyous "What cheer, O ?" and a grip of the hand which only the muscles of a trawler could sustain without discomfort.

The smacksmen was, erewhile, an uncontrollable social outlaw ; he is now a staid, sober citizen : religious, but free from maudlin sentiment, and without a taint of puritanical sourness. Perhaps he will by and by evolve into something even higher and nobler ; but be that as it may, it is assuredly a triumph to have displaced the obnoxious semi-savage by the sober citizen and the religious man.

The run to the Dogger Bank may be made in a trawling smack from either of the great seaports which are headquarters of the deep-sea fishery, or by steamer plying between London and the fleets.

The passage from the Thames is sometimes accomplished in twenty-four hours, but more frequently the stranger on his way to the fishing ground is pent up in the comfortless cabin of the steam cutter (or compelled to pace the deck in all the agonies of extreme *mal-de-mer*) for thirty-six, or sometimes forty-eight hours.

On the steamship there is abundant room for fish-boxes and their contents, but for people other than the crew the accommodation is scanty. There is plenty of food to be had—always assuming that one is none too fastidious in his taste ; but the passenger to the deep-sea fishery must be content to take his slumbers, if need be, on a hard locker, and may count himself happy if he passes the night without being precipitated by the rolling and lurching of the vessel from the said hard locker to an equally comfortless floor.

In the summer time the voyage is attended with a minimum of trouble ; and "a strange sight it is and a beautiful," at break of day, or when the sun is setting, to run into the midst of a great fleet of fishing smacks, numbering perhaps 150 sail, their tanned canvas glittering in the golden sunlight like so many wings of gossamer.

Each smack is ketch-rigged, registered as a trawler of the port from which she hies, and carries six or seven of a crew, who are known respectively as mate, third hand, etc. She is a vessel of from 50 to 80 tons burden, and, as is but natural and right, is a craft calculated to combat with the treacherous billows of the German Ocean more adequately than any other of the smaller class of vessel.

These fishing smacks cost from £800 to £1,200, and they mostly belong to large companies whose business it is (if the objectionable expression may be allowed) to "exploit" the fishermen for the benefit of their numerous shareholders. The "exploiting," however, has not been a financial success, for nearly all these great companies have sustained most serious losses during the past five years; and, sad to tell, there is as yet no immediate prospect of better times.

But it is not only the shareholders who suffer. The patient, heroic, deft and hard-working fish catcher on the "dreary Dowger" is, after all, the chief loser; for it is he who has passed through the hardships incidental to the deep-sea trawling, trudging the deck in the icy cold night, uncheered by aught save the innumerable stars that look down upon him from the silent heaven.

It is he who has toiled and troubled, in order to supply the London markets with fish, large trunks of which have been disposed of for no higher sum than *sixpence*! Such a return is bad enough truly for the stay-at-home "owner," but it is doubly trying for the seamen who are practically exiled from English skies, from English comforts, and all the joys and excitements which are within reach of the ordinary British workman. It is possible to exaggerate the trials of the smacksmen, but it is impossible to overdraw the colours of their lonely and isolated existence for periods of eight weeks at a stretch in the midst of the melancholy ocean.

On leaving the steam cutter, the landsman visitor will be transferred in the smack's boat to the particular vessel for which he is bound. On arriving alongside, he will be hoisted unceremoniously over the bulwarks, where he will find, in all probability, a slippery deck and scanty room in which to steady himself on the heaving vessel.

On descending below deck, he will be ushered into a dingy, smoky, ill-ventilated cabin—I speak of an ordinary trawler—a room which is shared in common by all hands on the smack, including the skipper. The latter, if he be a pious man, will maintain a certain amount of decorous discipline in the little chamber; but if the master be a careless, rollicking fellow, the old headlong animal elements in humanity will occasionally have free play.

The entire vessel is divided into two parts—one for the men and another for the fishes; but the latter, as befits the consequence of a receptacle for the more important article of the two, is by far the larger and more capacious. Here the empty fish-boxes are stowed when received from the fish-carrying steamer, but filled with fish packed in ice when awaiting delivery to the London, Lowestoft, Hull, or Grimsby cutter. In the crew's cabin the men eat, drink, sleep, and smoke; some read the Bible, and some books of the simpler sort; others spin interminable yarns, more or less true; and all drag out, as best they may, that happiest part of their existence when they are free from the arduous duties which fall to their lot while

engaged in watch on deck, or occupied with the various details incidental to the daily fishing operations.

The smacksmen, as a rule, sleep in their work-a-day garb. Descending from the lonely night-watch, cold, weary and not infrequently saturated to the skin, the exhausted toiler simply sinks upon the bare floor, or at best tumbles into a comfortless bunk, and finds, in deep slumber, a brief respite from his cheerless and dangerous toil. When the time for resumption of work again comes round, he rises, with clothes undried and stiffened limbs, and sets himself as he best may to re-commence the struggle with the elements which is an inevitable attendant of his labour as a fish-catcher on the Dogger.

The most important vessel in the fleet—the “admiral of all admirers”—is now usually a certain smack flying a well-known flag, which is, as has already been stated, the pioneer of religion, philanthropy, and the civilising influences of social life amongst the deep-sea trawlers.

But until a few years ago a very different vessel was wont to accompany the great North Sea fishing fleets. This was a foreign craft known as the “Coper.”

The “Coper” was a ship flying the Dutch or Belgian flag, but more commonly the former; and she sailed from one or other of the chief maritime ports in those two countries with a large cargo of tobacco, vile spirits, and bad literature. Thus was the sturdy animalism of the poor North Sea trawler effectually administered to at sea, and it is not too much to say that the arrival of one of these foreign cruisers was generally the prelude to a wild scene of debauchery, and almost cannibal ferocity.

Such events are happily a portion of the past. Good and cheap tobacco may be purchased on the Mission Ship; healthy literature is supplied; and the influence of the foreign craft is at an end. Happy is it for the deep-sea trawler that such is the case! Many a tragedy has been enacted on that wild strip of sea—many a scene dark and criminal—whose prime cause was the presence of the Dutch trader; and many a man now sleeps on the bed of the ocean who might have been alive and well, had it not been for the same evil agency.

Twice during the twenty-four hours—once by day and again in the night—the great trawl net is shot overboard.

The night-haul is, however, by far the more valuable of the two. The trawlers, indeed, reckon that one night-haul is worth two taken by day. During the night the vast bag net, attached to its enormous trawl-beam, scours the bottom of the sea, and, in the morning, after a long spell of hard labour, it is heaved in-board, and its contents emptied upon the deck.

In the haul, if it is a prolific one, a large quantity of sole, plaice, turbot, gurnet, cod, whiting, haddock, and such like, will be included.

The cleaning and packing of the fish in suitable boxes for convey-

ance by steamer to the London markets then follows, there being, as the reader will already have gathered, a regular service of cutters between the Metropolis and the Deep-Sea Fishery. The sole or haddock, which the London fishmonger declares to be in prime condition and to have been actually "caught yesterday morning," was forsooth brought up in the trawl a week ago on the "Dreary Dowger," and made the long journey of 250 miles to town amid a thick layer of ice in a big fish-box! Oh, nimble tongue of the astute trader!

Most curious and sometimes startling relics are occasionally brought up in the trawl net. These vary in importance and interest, from the child's plaything to the ghastly skeleton. Many a human skull has been tumbled on to the slippery deck, with its ghoulish, grinning teeth, furnishing a fitting opportunity for a North Sea Hamlet (if such there were) to exclaim: "Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment that were wont to get the table in a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning."

The North Sea trawler is thus interesting alike through his personality, his long sojourn on the ocean, and the nature of his work. Philanthropy and education will, between them, do great things for him; and just as there is at present no finer English seaman, so, ere long, there will, in all probability, be no worthier specimen of the hard-headed, upright, heroic, well-informed English working citizen.

And the romance of his life of toil and trouble will abide. The blasts of Heaven will continue to beat around him; the wild Nor'easter will not cease to sweep round the tail of the Dogger, carrying destruction in its course; the waves will still buffet him; he must in the fierce encounter suffer and suffer again. But in the future he will be made to feel, far more than he has done in the past, that his existence is not unknown to his countrymen; and that many good wishes and hearty sympathies are with him, as he spends the lonely hours, "placed far amid the melancholy main."

ALEXANDER GORDON.



FEATHERSTON'S STORY.

AT THE MAISON ROUGE.

IT was a fine, frosty day, and the first of December. The sun shone on the fair streets of Sainteville, and on the small congregation turning out of the English Protestant church after morning service.

Lavinia Preen went straight home. There she found that Madame Cardiac, who was to spend the rest of the day with her—Monsieur having gone to Lille—had not yet arrived, though the French church *Évangélique* was always over before the English. After glancing at Flore in the kitchen, busy over the fine ducks, Lavinia set off for the Rue Pomme Cuite.

She met Mary Cardiac turning out of it. "Let us go and sit under the wall in the sun," said Mary; "it is too early yet for the boat."

This was a high wall belonging to the strong north gates of the town, near Madame Cardiac's. The sun shone full upon the benches beneath it, which it sheltered from the bleak winds; in front was a patch of green grass, on which the children ran about amidst the straight poplar trees. It was very pleasant, sitting there, even on this December day; bright and cheerful; the wall behind them was quite warm, the sunshine rested upon all.

Sitting there, Lavinia Preen told Madame Cardiac of the curious dread of entering her house at night, which had pursued her for the past two months that she had been alone in it, and which she had never spoken of to anyone before. She went on to speak of the belief that she had seen Captain Fennel the previous night in the passage, and of the dream which had visited her when at length she fell asleep.

Madame Cardiac turned her kindly, sensible face, and her quiet, dark, surprised eyes upon Lavinia. "I cannot understand you," she said.

"You mean, I suppose, that you cannot understand the facts, Mary. Neither can I. Why this fear of going into the house should lie upon me is most strange. I never was nervous before."

"I don't know that that is so very strange," dissented Mary Cardiac, after a pause. "It must seem lonely to let oneself into a dark, empty house in the middle of the night; and your house is in what may be called an isolated situation; I should not much like it myself. That's nothing. What I cannot understand, Lavinia, is the fancy that you saw Captain Fennel."

"He appeared to be standing there, and was quite visible to me. The expression on his face, which seemed to be looking straight into mine, was most malicious. I never saw such an expression upon it in reality."

Mary Cardiac laughed a little, saying she had never been troubled with nervous fears herself; she was too practical for anything of the sort.

"And I have been practical hitherto," returned Lavinia. "When the first surprise of seeing him there, or fancying I saw him there, was over, I began to think, Mary, that he might be dead; that it was his apparition which had stood there looking at me."

Mary Cardiac shook her head. "Had anything of that kind happened, Nancy would have telegraphed to you. Rely upon it, Lavinia, it was pure fancy. You have been disagreeably exercised in mind lately, you know, about that man; hearing he was coming home, your brain was somewhat thrown off its balance."

"It may be so. The dream followed on it; and I did not like the dream."

"We all have bad dreams now and then. You say you do not remember much of this one."

"I think I did not know much of it when dreaming it," quaintly spoke Lavinia. "I was in a sea of trouble; throughout which I seemed to be striving to escape some evil menaced me by Captain Fennel, and could not do so. Whichever way I turned, there he was at a distance, scowling at me with a threatening, evil countenance. Mary," she added in impassioned tones, "I am sure some ill awaits me from that man."

"I am sure, were I you, I would put these foolish notions from me," calmly spoke Madame Cardiac. "If Nancy set up a vocation for seeing ghosts and dreaming dreams, one would not so much wonder at it. *You* have always been reasonable, Lavinia; be so now."

Miss Preen took out her watch and looked at it. "We may as well be walking towards the port, Mary," she remarked. "It is past two. The boat ought to be in sight."

Not only in sight was the steamer, but rapidly nearing the port. She had made a calm and quick passage. When at length she was in and about to swing round, and the two ladies were looking down at it, with a small crowd of other assembled spectators, the first passengers they saw on board were Nancy and Captain Fennel, who began to wave their hands in greeting and to nod their heads.

"Anyway, Lavinia, it could not have been his ghost last night," whispered Mary Cardiac.

Far from presenting an evil countenance to Lavinia, as the days passed on, Captain Fennel appeared to wish to please her, and was all suavity. So at present nothing disturbed the peace of the petite *Maison Rouge*.

"What people were they that you stayed with in London, Nancy?" Lavinia inquired of her sister on the first favourable opportunity.

Nancy glanced round the salon before answering, as if to make sure they were alone; but Captain Fennel had gone out for a stroll.

"We were at James Fennel's, Lavinia."

"What—the brother's! And has he a wife?"

"Yes; a wife, but no children. Mrs. James Fennel has money of her own, which she receives weekly."

"Receives weekly!" echoed Lavinia.

"She owns some little houses which are let out in weekly tenements; an agent collects the rents, and brings her the money every Tuesday morning. She dresses in the shabbiest things sometimes, and does her own housework, and altogether is not what I should call quite a lady, but she is very good-hearted. She did her best to make us comfortable, and never grumbled at our staying so long. I expect Edwin paid her something. James only came home by fits and starts. I think he was in some embarrassment—debt, you know. He used to dash into the house like a whirlwind when he did come, and steal out of it when he left, peering about on all sides."

"Have they a nice house?" asked Lavinia.

"Oh, good gracious, no! It's not a house at all, only small lodgings. And Mrs. James changed them twice over whilst we were there. When we first went they were at a place called Ball's Pond."

"Why did you stay all that time?"

Mrs. Edwin Fennel shook her head helplessly; she could not answer the question. "I should have liked to come back before," she said; "it was very wearisome, knowing nobody and having nothing to do. Did you find it dull here, Lavinia, all by yourself?"

"'Dull' is not the right word for it," answered Lavinia, catching her breath with a sigh. "I felt more lonely, Ann, than I shall ever care to feel again. Especially when I had to come home at night from some *soirée*, or from spending the evening quietly with Mary Cardiac or any other friend." And she went on to tell of the feeling of terror which had so tried her.

"I never heard of such a thing!" exclaimed Ann. "How silly you must be, Lavinia! What could there have been in the house to frighten you?"

"I don't know; I wish I did know," sighed Lavinia, just as she had said more than once before.

Nancy, who was attired in a bright ruby cashmere robe, with a gold chain and locket, some blue ribbons adorning her light ringlets, for she had made a point of dressing more youthfully than ever since her marriage, leaned back in her chair, as she sat staring at her sister and thinking.

"Lavinia," she said huskily, "you remember the feeling you

had the day we were about to look at the house with Mary Cardiac, and which you thought was through the darkness of the passage striking you unpleasantly? Well, my opinion is that it must have given you a scare."

"Why, of course it did."

"Ah, but I mean a scare which lasts," said Ann; "one of those scares which affect the mind and take very long to get rid of. You recollect poor Mrs. Hunt, at Buttermead. She was frightened at a violent thunderstorm, though she never had been before; and for years afterwards, whenever it thundered, she became so alarmingly ill and agitated that Mr. Featherston had to be run for. He called it a scare. I think the fear you felt that past day must have left that sort of scare upon you. How else can you account for what you tell me?"

Truth to say, the same idea had more than once struck Lavinia. She knew how devoid of reason some of these "scares" are, and yet how terribly they disturb the mind on which they fasten.

"But I had quite forgotten that fear, Ann," she urged in reply. "We had lived in the house eighteen months when you went away, and I had never recalled it."

"All the same, I think you received the scare; it had only lain dormant," persisted Ann.

"Well, well; you are back again now and it is over," said Lavinia. "Let us forget it. Do not speak of it again at all to anyone, Nancy love."

II.

WINTER that year had quite set in when Sainteville found itself honoured with rather a remarkable visitor; one Signor Talcke, who descended, one morning at the beginning of December, at the *Hôtel des Princes*. Though he called himself "Signor," it seemed uncertain to what country he owed his birth. He spoke five or six languages as a native, including Hindustani. Signor Talcke was a professor of occult sciences; he was a great astronomer; astrology he had at his fingers' ends. He was a powerful mesmerist; he would foretell the events of your life by your hands, or your fortune by the cards.

For a fee of twenty-five francs, he would attend an evening party, and exhibit some of his powers. Amidst others who engaged him were the Miss Bosanquets, in the Rue Lamartine. A relative of theirs, Sir George Bosanquet, K.C.B., had come over with his wife to spend Christmas with them. Sir George laughed at what he heard of Signor Talcke's powers of reading the future, and said he should much like to witness a specimen of it. So Miss Bosanquet and her sisters hastily arranged an evening entertainment, engaged the mystical man, and invited their friends and acquaintances, those of the little *Maison Rouge* included.

It took place on the Friday after Christmas Day. Something that occurred during the evening was rather remarkable. Miss Preen's diary gives a full account of it, and that shall be transcribed here. And I, Johnny Ludlow, take this opportunity of assuring the reader that what she wrote was in faithful accordance with the facts of the case.

From Miss Preen's Diary.

Saturday morning.—I feel very tired; fit for nothing. Nancy has undertaken to do the marketing, and is gone out for that purpose with her husband. It is to be hoped she will be moderate, and not attempt to buy up half the market.

I lay awake all night, after the evening at Miss Bosanquet's, thinking how foolish Ann was to have had her "future cast," as that Italian (if he is Italian) called it, and how worse than foolish I was to let what he said worry me. "As if there could be anything in it!" laughed Ann, as we were coming home; fortunately she is not as I am in temperament—nervously anxious. "It is only nonsense," said Miss Anna Bosanquet to me when the Signor's predictions were at an end; "he will tell someone else just the same next time." But I did not think so. Of course one is at a loss how to trust this kind of man. Take him for all in all, I rather like him; and he appears to believe implicitly in what he says: or, rather, in what he tells us the cards say.

They are charming women, these three sisters—Grace, Rose and Anna Bosanquet; good, considerate, high-bred ladies. I wonder how it is they have lived to middle life without any one of them marrying? And I often wonder how they came to take up their residence at Sainteville, for they are very well off, and have great connections. I remember, though, Anna once said to me that the dry, pure air of the place suited her sister Rose, who has bad health, better than any other they had tried.

When seven o'clock struck, the hour named, Nancy and I appeared together in the sitting-room, ready to start, for we observe punctuality at Sainteville. I wore my black satin, handsome yet, trimmed with the rich white lace that Mrs. Selby gave me. Nancy looked very nice and young in her lilac silk. She wore a white rose in her hair, and her gold chain and locket round her neck. Captain Fennel surprised us by saying he was not going—his neuralgia had come on. I fancied it was an excuse—that he did not wish to meet Sir George Bosanquet. He had complained of the same thing on Christmas Day, so it might be true. Ann and I set off together, leaving him nursing his cheek at the table.

It was a large gathering for Sainteville—forty guests, I should think; but the rooms are large. Professor Talcke exhibited some wonderful feats in—what shall I call it?—necromancy?—as good a word, perhaps, as any other. He mesmerised some people, and put one of them into a state of clairvoyance, and her revelations took my

breath away. Signor Talcke assured us that what she said would be found minutely true. I think he has the strangest eyes I ever saw: grey eyes, with a sort of light in their depths. His features are fair and delicate, his voice is gentle as a woman's, his manner retiring; Sir George seemed much taken with him.

Later, when the evening was passing, he asked if anyone present would like to have their future cast, for he had cards which would do it. Three of his listeners pressed forward at once; two of them with gay laughter, the other pale and awestruck. The Signor went into the recess in the small room, and sat down behind the little table there, and as many as could crowd round to look on, did so. I don't know what passed; there was no room for me; or whether the "Futures" he disclosed were good or bad. I had sat on the sofa at a distance, talking with Anna Bosanquet and Madame Cardiac.

Suddenly, as we were for a moment silent, Ann's voice was heard, eager and laughing:

"Will you tell my fortune, Signor Talcke? I should like to have mine revealed."

"With pleasure, madame," he answered.

We got up and drew near. I felt vexed that Ann should put herself forward in any such matter, and whispered to her; but she only shook her curls, laughed at me, and persisted. Signor Talcke put the cards in her hands, telling her to shuffle them.

"It is all fun, Lavinia," she whispered to me. "Did you hear him tell Miss Peet she was going to have money left her?"

After Ann had shuffled the cards, he made her cut them into three divisions, and he then turned them up on the table himself, faces upwards, and laid them out in three rows. They were not like the cards we play with; quite different from those; nearly all were picture-cards, and the plain ones bore cabalistic characters. We stood looking on with two or three other people; the rest had dispersed, and had gone into the next room to listen to the singing.

At first Signor Talcke never spoke a word. He looked at the cards, and looked at Nancy; looked, and looked again. "They are not propitious," he said in low tones, and picked them up, and asked Nancy to shuffle and cut them again. Then he laid them out as before, and we stood waiting in silence.

Chancing at that moment to look at Signor Talcke, his face startled me. He was frowning at the cards in so painful a manner as to quite alter its expression. But he did not speak. He still only gazed at the cards with bent eyes, and glanced up at Ann occasionally. Then, with an impatient sweep of the hand, he pushed the cards together.

"I must trouble you to shuffle and cut them once more, madame," he said. "Shuffle them well."

"Are they still unpropitious?" asked a jesting voice at my elbow. Turning, I saw Charley Palliser's smiling face. He must have been standing there, and heard Signor Talcke's previous remark.

"Yes, sir, they are," replied the Signor, with marked emphasis. "I never saw the cards so unpropitious in my life."

Nancy took up the cards, shuffled them well, and cut them three times. Signor Talcke laid them out as before, bent his head, and looked attentively at them. He did not speak, but there was no mistaking the vexed, pained and puzzled look on his face.

I do not think he knew Nancy, even by name. I do not think he knew me, or had the least notion that we were related. Neither of us had ever met him before. He put his hand to his brow, still gazing at the cards.

"But when are you going to begin my fortune, sir?" broke in Nancy.

"I would rather not tell it at all, madame," he answered.

"*Cannot* you tell it?—have your powers of forecasting inconveniently run away?" said she incautiously, her tone mocking in her disappointment.

"I could tell it, all too surely; but you might not like to hear it," returned he.

"Our magician has lost his divining rod just when he needed it," observed a gentleman with a grey beard, a stranger to me, who was standing opposite, speaking in a tone of ill-natured satire; and a laugh went round.

"It is not that," said the Signor, keeping his temper perfectly. "I could tell what the cards say, all too certainly; but it would not give satisfaction."

"Oh, yes, it would," said Nancy. "I should like to hear it, every bit of it. Please do begin."

"The cards are dark; very dark indeed," he said; "I don't remember ever to have seen them like it. Each time they have been turned, the darkness has increased. *Nothing* can show worse than they do now."

"Never mind that," gaily returned Ann. "You undertook to tell my fortune, sir; and you ought not to make excuses in the middle of it. Let the cards be as dark as night, we must hear what they say."

He drew in his thin lips for a moment, and then spoke, his tone quiet, calm, unemotional.

"Some great evil threatens you," he began; "you seem to be living in the midst of it. It is not only you that it threatens; there is another also——"

"Oh, my goodness," interrupted Nancy, in her childish way. "I hope it does not threaten Edwin! What *is* the evil? Sickness?"

"Worse than that. It—it——" Signor Talcke's attention was so absorbed by the aspect of the cards, that, as it struck me, he appeared hardly to heed what he was saying. He had a long, thin, black pencil in his long, thin fingers, and kept pointing to different cards as if in accordance with his thoughts, but not touching them.

"There is some peculiar form of terror here," he went on. "I cannot make it out; it is very unusual. It does not come close to you; not yet, at any rate; and it seems to surround you. It seems to be in the house. May I ask"—quickly lifting his eyes to Ann—"whether you are given to superstitious fears?"

"Do you mean ghosts?" cried Ann, and Charley Palliser burst out laughing. "Not at all, sir; I don't believe in ghosts. I'm sure there are none in our house."

Remembering my own terror in regard to the house, and the nervous fancy of having seen Captain Fennel in it when he was miles away, a curious impression came over me that he must surely be reading my fortune as well as Nancy's. But I was not prepared for her next words. Truly she has no more reticence than a child.

"My sister has a feeling that the house is lonely. She shivers when she has to go into it after nightfall."

Signor Talcke let his hands fall on the table, and lifted his face. Apparently, he was digesting this revelation. I do not think he knew the "sister" was present. For my part, disliking publicity, I slipped behind Anna Bosanquet, and stood by Charley Palliser.

"Shivers?" repeated the Italian.

"Shivers and trembles, and turns sick at having to go in," affirmed Nancy. "So she told me when I arrived home from England."

"If a feeling of that sort assailed me, I should never go into the house again," said the Signor.

"But how could you help it, if it were your home?" she argued.

"All the same. I should regard that feeling as a warning against the house, and never enter it. Then you are not yourself troubled with superstitious fears?" he broke off, returning to the business in hand, and looking at the cards. "Well—at present—it does not seem to touch you, this curious terror which is assuredly in the house——"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Ann. "Why do you say 'at present?' Is it to touch me later?"

"I cannot say. Each time that the cards have been spread it has shown itself nearer to you. It is not yet very near. Apart from that terror—or perhaps remotely connected with it—I see evil threatening you. Great evil."

"Is it in the house?"

"Yes; hovering about it. It is not only yourself it seems to threaten. There is someone else. And it is nearer to that person than it is to you."

"But who is that person? Man or woman?"

"It is a woman. See this ugly card," continued he, pointing with his pencil; "it will not be got rid of, shuffle as you will; it has come nearer to that woman each time."

The card he pointed to was more curious looking than any other in the pack. It was not unlike the nine of spades, but crowded with

devices. The gentleman opposite, whom I did not know, leaned forward and touched the card with the tip of his forefinger.

"Le cercueil, n'est-ce pas?" said he.

"My!" whispered an English lad's voice behind me. "Cercueil? that means coffin."

"How did you know?" asked Signor Talcke of the grey-bearded man.

"I was at the Sous-Préfet's soirée on Sunday evening when you were exhibiting. I heard you tell him in French that that was the ugliest card in the pack: indicating death."

"Well, it is not this lady the card is pursuing," said the Signor smiling at Ann to reassure her. "Not yet awhile, at least. And we must all be pursued by it in our turn, whenever that shall come," he added, bending over the cards again. "Pardon me, madame—may I ask whether there has not been some unpleasantness in the house concerning money?"

Nancy's face turned red. "Not—exactly," she answered with hesitation. "We are like a great many more people—not as rich as we should wish to be."

"It does not appear to lie precisely in the want of money: but certainly money is in some way connected with the evil," he was beginning to say, his eyes fixed dreamily on the cards, when Ann interrupted him.

"That is too strong a word—evil. Why do you use it?"

"I use it because the evil is there. No lighter word would be appropriate. There is some evil element pervading your house, very grave and formidable; it is most threatening; likely to go on to—to darkness. I mean that it looks as if there would be some great break-up," he corrected swiftly, as if to soften the other word.

"That the house would be broken up?" questioned Ann.

He stole a glance at her. "Something of that sort," he said carelessly.

"Do you mean that the evil comes from an enemy?" she went on.

"Assuredly."

"But we have no enemy. I'm sure we have not one in all the world."

He slightly shook his head. "You may not suspect it yet, though I should have said"—waving the pencil thoughtfully over some of the cards—"that he was already suspected—doubted."

Nancy took up the personal pronoun briskly. "He!—then the evil enemy must be a man? I assure you we do not know any man likely to be our enemy or to wish us harm. No, nor woman either. Perhaps your cards don't tell true to-night, Signor Talcke?"

"Perhaps not, madame; we will let it be so if you will," he quietly said, and shuffled all the cards together.

That ended the séance. As if determined not to tell any more

fortunes, the Signor hurriedly put up the cards and disappeared from the recess. Nancy did not appear to be in the least impressed.

"What a curious 'future' it was!" she exclaimed lightly to Mary Cardiac. "I might as well not have had it cast. He told me nothing."

They walked away together. I went back to the sofa and Anna Bosanquet followed me.

"Mrs. Fennel calls it 'curious,'" I said to her. "I call it more than that—strange; ominous. I wish I had not heard it."

"Dear Miss Preen, it is only nonsense," she answered. "He will tell someone else the same next time." But she only so spoke to console me.

A wild wish flashed into my mind—that I should ask the man to tell *my* future. But had I not heard enough? Mine was blended with this of Ann's. I was the other woman whom the dark fate was more relentlessly pursuing. There could be no doubt of that. There could be as little doubt that it was I who already suspected the author of the "evil." What can the "dark fate" be that we are threatened with? Debt? Will his debts spring upon us and break up our home, and turn us out of it? Or will it be something worse? That card which followed me meant a coffin, they said. Ah me! Perhaps I am foolish to dwell upon such ideas. Certainly they are more fitting for the world's dark ages than for this enlightened nineteenth century of it.

Charley Palliser gallantly offered to see us home. I said no; as if we were not old enough to go by ourselves; but he would come with us. As we went along Ann began talking of the party, criticising the dresses, and so on. Charley seemed to be unusually silent.

"Was not mine a grand fortune?" she presently said, with a laugh, as we crossed the Place Ronde.

"Stunning," said he.

"As if there could be anything in it, you know! Does the man think we believe him, I wonder?"

"Oh, these conjurers like to fancy they impose on us," remarked Charley, shaking hands as we halted before the house of Mme. Sauvage.

And I have had a wretched night, for somehow the thing has frightened me. I never was superstitious; never; and I'm sure I never believed in conjurers, as Charles had it. If I should come across Signor Talcke again while he stays here, I would ask him—Here comes Nancy! and Flore behind her with the marketings. I'll put up my diary.

"I've bought such a lovely capon," began Nancy, as Lavinia went into the kitchen. "Show it to Madame, Flore."

It was one that even Lavinia could praise; they both understood poultry. "It really is a beauty," said Lavinia. "And did you remember the salsifis? And, Ann, where have you left your husband?"

"Oh, we met old Mr. Griffin, and Edwin has gone up to Drecques with him. My opinion is, Lavinia, that that poor old Griffin dare not go about far by himself since his attack. He had to see his landlord at Drecques to-day, and he asked Edwin to accompany him. They went by the eleven o'clock train."

Lavinia felt it a relief. Even that little absence, part of a day, she felt thankful for, so much had she grown to dislike the presence in the house of Edwin Fennel.

"Did you tell your husband about your 'Fortune,' Nancy?"

"No: I was too sleepy last night to talk, and I was late in getting up this morning. I'm not sure that I shall tell him," added Mrs. Fennel thoughtfully: "he might be angry with me for having had it done."

"That is more than likely," replied Lavinia.

Late in the afternoon, as they were sitting together in the salon, they saw the postman come marching up the yard. He brought two letters—one for Miss Preen, the other for her sister.

"It is the remittance from William Selby," said Lavinia as she opened hers. "He has sent it a day or two earlier than usual; it is not really due until Monday or Tuesday."

Seventeen pounds ten shillings each. Nancy, in a hasty sort of manner, put her cheque into the hands of Lavinia, almost as if she feared it would burn her own fingers. "You had better take it from me whilst you can," she said in low tones.

"Yes; for I must have it, Ann," was the answer. "We are in debt—as you may readily conceive—with only half the usual amount to spend last quarter."

"It was not my fault; I was very sorry," said Ann humbly: and she rose hastily to go to the kitchen, saying she was thirsty, and wanted a glass of water. But Lavinia thought she went to avoid being questioned.

Lavinia carried the two cheques to her room and locked them up. After their five o'clock dinner, each sister wrote a note to Colonel Selby, enclosing her receipt. Flore took them out to post when she left. The evening passed on. Lavinia worked; Nancy nodded over the fire: she was very sleepy, and went to bed early.

It was past eleven o'clock when Captain Fennel came in, a little the worse for something or other. After returning from Drecques by the last train, he had gone home with Mr. Griffin to supper. He told Lavinia, in words running into one another, that the jolting train had made him giddy. Of course she believed as much of that as she liked, but did not contradict it. He went to the cupboard in the recess, unlocked it to get out the cognac, and then sat down with his pipe by the embers of the dying fire. Lavinia, unasked, brought in a decanter of water, put it on the table with a glass, and wished him good-night.

All next day Captain Fennel lay in bed; he had a racking

headache. His wife carried up a choice bit of the capon when they were dining after morning service, but he could not so much as look at it. Being a fairly cautious man as a rule, he had to pay for—for the jolting of the train.

He was better on Monday morning, but not well, still shaky, and did not come down to breakfast. It was bitterly cold—a sort of black frost; but Lavinia, wrapping herself up warmly, went out as soon as breakfast was over.

Her first errand was to the bank, where she paid in the cheques and received French money for them. Then she visited sundry shops; the butcher's, the grocer's, and others, settling the accounts due. Last of all, she made a call upon Madame Veuve Sauvage, and paid the rent for the past quarter. All this left her with exactly nineteen pounds, which was all the money she had to go on with for every purpose until the end of March—three whole months.

Lunch was ready when she returned. Taking off her things upstairs and locking up her cash, she went down to it. Flore had made some delicious *soupe maigre*. Only those who have tried it know how good it is on a sharp winter's day. Captain Fennel seemed to relish it much, though his appetite had not quite come back to him, and he turned from the dish of scrambled eggs which supplemented the soup. In the evening they went, by appointment, to dine at Madame Cardiac's, the other guests being Monsieur Henri Dupuis with his recently-married wife, and Charles Palliser.

After dinner, over the coffee, M. Henri Dupuis suddenly spoke of the *soirée* at Miss Bosanquet's the previous Friday, regretting that he and his wife had been unable to attend it. He was engaged the whole evening with a patient dangerously ill, and his wife did not like to appear at it without him. Nancy—Nancy!—then began to tell about the "Fortune" which had been forecast for her by Signor Talcke, thinking possibly that her husband could not reproach her for it before company. She was very gay over it; a proof that it had left no bad impression on her mind.

"What's that, Nancy?" cried Captain Fennel, who had listened as if he disbelieved his ears. "The fellow told you we had something evil in our house?"

"Yes, he did," assented Nancy. "An evil influence, he said, which was destined to bring forth something dark and dreadful."

"I am sorry you did not tell this before," returned the Captain stiffly. "I should have requested you not again to allude to such folly. It was downright insolence."

"I—you—you were out on Saturday, you know, Edwin, and in bed with your headache all Sunday; and to-day I forgot it," said Nancy in less brave tones.

"Suppose we have a game at wholesome card playing," interpose Mary Cardiac, bringing forth a new pack. "Open them, will you Jules? Do you remember, *mon ami*, having your fortune told onc

by a gipsy woman when we were in Sir John Witney's coppice with the two Peckham girls? She told you you would fall into a rich inheritance and marry a Frenchwoman."

"Neither of which agreeable promises is yet fulfilled," said little M. Cardiac with his happy smile. M. Cardiac had heard the account of Nancy's "forecast" from his wife; he was not himself present, but taking a hand at whist in the card-room.

They sat down to a round game—Spin. M. Henri Dupuis and his pretty young wife had never played it before, but they soon learned it and liked it much. Both of them spoke English well; she with the prettiest accent imaginable. Thus the evening passed, and no more allusion was made to the fortune-telling at Miss Bosanquet's.

That was Monday. On Tuesday, Miss Preen was dispensing the coffee at breakfast in the little Maison Rouge to her sister and Mr. Fennel, when Flore came bustling in with a letter in her hand.

"Tenez, madame," she said, putting it beside Mrs. Fennel. "I laid it down in the kitchen when the facteur brought it, whilst I was preparing the déjeuner, and forgot it afterwards."

Before Nancy could touch the letter, her husband caught it up. He gazed at the address, at the postmark, and turned it about to look at the seal. The letters of gentlefolk were generally fastened with a seal in those days: this had one in transparent bronze wax.

Mr. Fennel put the letter down with a remark peevishly uttered. "It is not from London: it is from Buttermead."

"And from your old friend, Jane Peckham, Nancy," struck in Lavinia. "I recognise her handwriting."

"I am glad," exclaimed Nancy; "I have not heard from them for ages. Why now—is it not odd?—that M. Cardiac should mention the Peckhams last night and I receive a letter from them this morning?"

"I supposed it might be from London, with your remittance," said Mr. Fennel to his wife. "It is due, is it not?"

"Oh, that came on Saturday, Edwin," she said, as she opened her letter.

"Came on Saturday!" echoed Captain Fennel, ungraciously, as if disputing the assertion.

"By the afternoon post. You were at Drecques, you know."

"The money came? Your money?"

"Yes," said Nancy, who had stepped to the window to read her letter, for it was a dark day, and stood there with her back to the room.

"And where is it?" demanded he.

"I gave it to Lavinia. I always give it to her."

Captain Fennel glared at his wife for a moment, then smoothed his face to its ordinary placidity, and turned to Lavinia.

"Will you be good enough to hand over to me my wife's money, Miss Preen?"

"No," she answered quietly.

"I must trouble you to do so, when breakfast shall be finished.

"I cannot," pursued Lavinia. "I have paid it away."

"That I do not believe. I claim it from you in right of my wife; and I shall enforce the claim."

"The money is Nancy's, not yours," said Lavinia. "In consequence of your having stopped her share last quarter in London, I was plunged here into debt and great inconvenience. Yesterday morning I went out to settle the debts—and it has taken the whole of her money to do it. That is the state of things, Captain Fennel."

"I am in debt here myself," retorted he, but not angrily. "I owe money to my tailor and bootmaker; I owe an account at the chemist's; I want money in my pockets—and I must, indeed, have it."

"Not from me," returned Lavinia.

Edwin Fennel broke into a little access of temper. He dashed his serviette on the table, strode to the window, and roughly caught his wife by the arm. She cried out.

"How dared you hand your money to anyone but me?" he asked in a low voice of passion.

"But how are we to live if I don't give it to Lavinia for the housekeeping?" returned Nancy, bursting into tears. "It takes all we have; her share and mine; every farthing of it."

"Let my sister alone, Mr. Fennel," spoke up Lavinia with authority. "She is responsible for the debts we contract in this house, just as much as I am, and she must contribute her part to pay them. You ought to be aware that the expenses are now increased by nearly a third; I assure you I hardly like to face the difficulties I see before me."

"Do you suppose I can stop in the place without some loose cash to keep me going?" he asked calmly. "Is that reasonable, Miss Lavinia?"

"And do you suppose I can keep you and Ann here without her money to help me to do it?" she rejoined. "Perhaps the better plan will be for me to take up my abode elsewhere, and leave the house to you and Ann to do as you please in it."

Captain Fennel dropped his argument, returned to the table and went on with his breakfast. The last words had startled him. Without Lavinia, which meant without her money, they could not live in the house at all.

Matters were partly patched up in the course of the day. Nancy came upstairs to Lavinia, begging and praying, as if she were praying for her life, for a little ready money for her husband—just a hundred francs. Trembling and sobbing, she confessed that she dared not return to him without it; she should be too frightened at his anger.

And Lavinia gave it to her.

III.

MATTERS went on to the spring. There were no outward differences in the petite Maison Rouge, but it was full of an under-current of discomfort. At least, for Lavinia. Captain Fennel was simply to her an incubus; and now and again petty accounts of his would be brought to the door by tradespeople, who wanted them settled. As to keeping up the legitimate payments, she could not do it.

March was drawing to an end, when a surprise came to them. Lavinia received a letter from Paris, written by Colonel Selby. He had been there for two days on business, he said, and purposed returning *viâ* Sainteville, to take a passing glimpse at herself and her sister. He hoped to be down that afternoon by the three o'clock train, and he asked them to meet him at the Hôtel des Princes afterwards, and to stay to dine with him. He proposed crossing to London by the night boat.

Lavinia read the letter aloud. Nancy went into ecstasies, for a wonder; she had been curiously subdued in manner lately. Edwin Fennel made no remark, but his pale face wore a look of thought.

During the morning he betook himself to the Rue Lothaire to call upon Mr. Griffin; and he persuaded that easy-natured old gentleman to take advantage of the sunny day, and make an excursion *en voiture* to the nearest town, a place called Pontipette. Of course the Captain went also, as his companion.

Colonel Selby arrived at three. Lavinia and Nancy met him at the station, and went with him in the omnibus to the hotel. They then showed him about Sainteville, to which he was a stranger, took him to see their domicile, the little red house (which he did not seem to admire), and from thence to Madame Cardiac's. In the Butter-mead days, the Colonel and Mary Featherston had been great friends. He invited her and her husband to join them at the table d'hôte dinner at five o'clock.

Lavinia and Nancy went home again to change their dresses for it. Nancy put on a pretty light green silk, which had been recently modernised. Mrs. Selby had kept up an extensive wardrobe, and had left it between the two sisters.

"You should wear your gold chain and locket," remarked Lavinia, who always took pride in her sister's appearance. "It will look very nice upon that dress."

She alluded to a short, thick chain of gold, the gold locket attached to it being set round with pearls, Nancy's best ornament; nay, the only one she had of any value; it was the one she had worn at Miss Bosanquet's celebrated party. Nancy made no answer. She was turning red and white.

"What's the matter?" cried Lavinia.

The matter was, that Mr. Edwin Fennel had obtained possession

of the chain and locket more than a month ago. Silly Nancy confessed with trembling lips that she feared he had pledged it.

Or sold it, thought Lavinia. She felt terribly vexed and indignant. "I suppose, Ann, it will end in his grasping everything," she said, "and starving us out of house and home: *myself*, at any rate."

"He expects money from his brother James, and then he will get it back for me," twittered Nancy.

M. Jules Cardiac was not able to come to the table d'hôte; his duties that night would detain him at the college until seven o'clock. It happened so on occasion. Colonel Selby sat at one end of their party, Lavinia at the other; Mary Cardiac and Nancy between them. A gentleman was on the other side of Lavinia whom she did not particularly notice; and, upon his asking the waiter for something, his voice seemed to strike upon her memory. Turning, she saw it was the tall Englishman they had seen on the pier some months before in the shepherd's plaid, the lawyer named Lockett. He recognised her face at the same moment, and they entered into conversation.

"Are you making any stay at Sainteville?" she inquired.

"For a few days. I must be back in London on Monday morning."

Colonel Selby's attention was attracted to the speakers. "What, is it you, Lockett?" he exclaimed.

Mr. Lockett bent forward to look beyond Lavinia and Madame Cardiac. "Why, Colonel, are you here?" he cried. So it was evident that they knew one another.

But you can't talk very much across people at a table d'hôte; and Lavinia and Mr. Lockett were, so to say, left together again. She put a question to him, dropping her voice to a whisper.

"Did you ever find that person you were looking for?"

"The person I was looking for?" repeated the lawyer, not remembering. "What person was that?"

"The one you spoke of on the pier that day—a Mr. Dangerfield."

"Oh, ay; but I was not looking for him myself. No, I believe he is not dropped upon yet. He is keeping quiet, I expect."

"Is he still being looked for?"

"Little doubt of that. My friend here, on my left, could tell you more about him than I can, if you want to know."

"No, thank you," said Lavinia hastily, in a sort of fear. And she then observed that next to Mr. Lockett another Englishman was sitting, who looked very much like a lawyer also.

After dinner Colonel Selby took his guests, the three ladies, into the little salon, which opened to Madame Podevin's bureau, for it was she who, French fashion, kept the bureau and all its accounts, not her husband. Whilst the coffee, which the Colonel ordered, was preparing, he took from his pocket-book two cheques, and gave one each to Lavinia and Mrs. Fennel. It was their quarterly income, due about a week hence.

"I thought I might as well give it you now, as I am here, and save the trouble of sending," he remarked. "You can write me a receipt for it; here's pen, ink and paper."

Each wrote her receipt, and gave it him. Nancy held the cheque in her hand, looking at her sister in a vacillating manner. "I suppose I ought to give it you, Lavinia," she said. "Must I do so?"

"What do you think about it yourself?" coldly rejoined Lavinia.

"He was so very angry with me the last time," sighed Nancy, still withholding the cheque. "He said I ought to keep possession of my own, and he ordered me to do so in future."

"That he may have the pleasure of spending it," said Mary Cardiac in a sharp tone, though she laughed at the same time. "Lavinia has to pay for the bread and cheese that you and he eat, Nancy; how can she do that unless she receives your money?"

"Yes, I know; it is very difficult," said poor Nancy. "Take the cheque, Lavinia; I shall tell him that you and Mary Cardiac both said I must give it up."

"Oh, tell him I said so, and welcome," spoke Madame Cardiac. "I will tell him so myself, if you like."

As Colonel Selby returned to the room—he had been seeing to his luggage—the coffee was brought in, and close upon it came Monsieur Cardiac.

The boat for London was leaving early that night; eight o'clock; they all went down to it to see William Selby off. It was a calm night, warm for the time of year, the moon beautifully bright. After the boat's departure Lavinia and Ann went home, and found Captain Fennel there. He had just got in, he said, and wanted some supper.

Whilst he was taking it, his wife told him of Mr. Lockett's having sat by them at the table d'hôte, and that he and Colonel Selby were acquainted with one another. Captain Fennel drew a grim face at the information, and asked whether the lawyer had also "cleared out" for London.

"I don't think so; I did not see him go on board," said Nancy. "Lavinia knows; she was talking with Mr. Lockett all dinner-time."

Captain Fennel turned his impassive face to Lavinia, as if demanding an answer to his question.

"Mr. Lockett intends to remain here until Sunday, I fancy; he said he had to be in London on Monday morning. He has some friend with him here. I inquired whether they had found the Mr. Dangerfield he spoke of last autumn," added Lavinia slowly and distinctly. "'Not yet,' he answered, 'but he is still being looked for.'"

Whether Lavinia said this with a little spice of malice, or whether she really meant to warn him, she best knew. Captain Fennel finished his supper in silence.

"I presume the Colonel did not hand you over your quarter's

money?" he next said to his wife in a mocking sort of way. "It is not due for a week yet; he is not one to pay beforehand."

Upon which Nancy began to tremble and looked imploringly at her sister, who was putting the plates together upon the tray. After Flore went home they had to wait upon themselves.

"Colonel Selby did hand us the money," said Lavinia. "I hold both the cheques for it."

Well, there ensued a mild disturbance; what schoolboys might call a genteel row. Mr. Edwin Fennel insisted upon his wife's cheque being given to him. Lavinia decisively refused. She went into a bit of a temper, and told him some home truths. He said he had a right to hold his wife's money, and should appeal to the law on the morrow to enforce it. He might do that, Lavinia retorted; no French law would make her give it up. Nancy began to cry.

Probably he knew his threats were futile. Instead of appealing to the law on the morrow, he went off by an early train, carrying Nancy with him. Lavinia's private opinion was that he thought it safer to take her, though it did increase the expense, than to leave her; she might get talking with Mr. Lockett. Ann's eyes were red, as if she had spent the night in crying.

"Has he *beaten* you?" Lavinia inquired, snatching the opportunity of a private moment.

"Oh, Lavinia, don't, don't! I shall *never* dare to let you have the cheque again," she wailed.

"Where is it that you are going?"

"He has not told me," Nancy whispered back again. "To Calais, I think, or else up to Lille. We are to be away all the week."

"Until Mr. Lockett and his friend are gone," thought Lavinia. "Nancy, how can he find money for it?"

"He has some Napoleons in his pocket—borrowed yesterday, I think, from old Griffin."

Lavinia understood. Old Griffin, as Nancy styled him, had been careless of his money since his very slight attack of paralysis; he would freely lend to anyone who asked him. She had not the slightest doubt that Captain Fennel had borrowed of him—and not for the first time.

It was on Wednesday morning that they went away, and for the rest of the week Lavinia was at peace. She changed the cheques at the bank as before, and paid the outstanding debts. But it left her so little to go on with, that she really knew not how she should get through the months until midsummer.

On Friday two of the Miss Bosanquets called. Hearing she was alone they came to ask her to dine with them in the evening. Lavinia did so. But upon returning home at night, the old horror of going into the house came on again. Lavinia was in despair; she had hoped it had passed away for good.

On Saturday morning at market she met Madame Cardiac, who

invited her for the following day, Sunday. Lavinia hesitated. Glad enough, indeed, she was at the prospect of being taken out of her solitary home for a happy day at Mary Cardiac's; but she shrank from again risking the dreadful feeling, which would be sure to attack her, when going into the house at night.

"You must come, Lavinia," cheerily urged Madame Cardiac. "I have invited the English teacher at Madame Deauville's school; she has no friends here, poor thing."

"Well, I will come, Mary; thank you," said Lavinia slowly.

"To be sure you will. Why do you hesitate at all?"

Lavinia could not say why in the midst of the jostling marketplace; perhaps would not had they been alone. "For one thing, they may be coming home before to-morrow," observed Lavinia, alluding to Mr. and Mrs. Fennel.

"Let them come. You are not obliged to stay at home with them," laughed Mary.

From the Diary of Miss Preen.

Monday morning.—Well, it is over. The horror of last night is over, and I have not died of it. That will be considered a strong expression should any eye, save my own, see this diary; but I truly believe the horror would kill me if I were subjected many times more to it.

I went to Mary Cardiac's after our service was over in the morning, and we had a pleasant day there. The more I see of M. Jules, the more I esteem and respect him. He is so genuine, so good at heart, so simple in manner. Miss Perry is very agreeable; not so young as I had thought, thirty last birthday, she says. Her English is good, its accent refined, and that is not always the case with the English teachers who come over to France—the French ladies who engage them cannot judge of our accent.

Miss Perry and I left together a little before ten. She wished me good-night in the Rue de Tessin, Madame Deauville's house lying one way, mine another. The horror began to come over me as I crossed the Place Ronde, which had never happened before. Stay; not the horror itself, but the dread of it. An impulse actually crossed me to ring at Madame Sauvage's, and ask Mariette to accompany me up the entry and stand at my open door whilst I went in to light the candle. But I could see no light in the house, not even in madame's salon, and supposed she and Mariette might be gone to bed. They are early people on Sundays; and the two young men have their latch-keys.

I will try to overcome it this time, I bravely said to myself; and not allow the fear to keep me halting outside the door as it has done before. So I took out my latch-key, put it straight into the door, opened it, went in, and closed it again. Before I had well reached the top of the passage and felt for the match-box on

the slab, I was in a paroxysm of horror. Something, like an icy wind coming up the passage, seemed to flutter the candle as I lighted it. Can I have left the door open, I thought; and turned to look. There stood Edwin Fennel. He stood just inside the door, which appeared to be shut, and he was looking straight at me with a threatening, malignant expression on his pale face.

"Oh! have you come home to-night?" I exclaimed aloud. For I really thought it was so.

The candle continued to flicker quickly as if it meant to go out, causing me to glance at it. When I looked up again Mr. Fennel was gone. *It was not himself who had been there; it was only an illusion.*

Exactly as he had seemed to appear to me the night before he and Nancy returned from London in December, so he had appeared again; his back to the door, and the evil menace on his countenance. Did the appearance come to me as a warning? Or was the thing nothing but a delusion of my own optic nerves?

I dragged my shaking limbs upstairs, on the verge of screaming at each step with the fear of what might be behind me, and undressed and went to bed. For nearly the whole night I could not sleep, and when I did get to sleep in the morning I was tormented by a distressing dream. All, all, as it had been that other night from three to four months ago.

A confused dream, no method in it. Several people were about, Nancy for one; I saw her fair curls. We all seemed to be in grievous discomfort and distress; while I, in worse fear than this world can know, was ever striving to hide myself from Edwin Fennel, to escape some dreadful fate which he held in store for me. And I knew I should not escape it.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.



TRAPPING A PANTHER.

TWO years ago, I was ordered by my doctor to spend a winter at Algiers to recruit.

I was not allowed to do any work, and my wife used to overhaul all my correspondence, and look grumpy when I tried to kill time by writing a letter. I amused myself by taking long walks in the neighbourhood, or strolling about the streets of Algiers. I soon got tired of pottering about the "Kasbah" and panted for "fresh woods and pastures new" to explore. My curiosity had been excited by the glowing description of the scenery in Kabylia, the mountainous country that divides the two departments of Algiers and Constantine, and I determined to visit the country for a short time.

My arrangements were soon completed, and in a few days I was comfortably installed in the pleasant little "Hôtel des Voyageurs" at Medeah, a military station beautifully situated among the mountains. Here I resumed my walks and excursions, sketching a little, botanising a little, and smoking—well, a good deal, to make up for my enforced abstinence from tobacco while at Algiers.

One evening I returned to my hotel rather late after a prolonged stroll among the mountains, and found my friend the landlord, Monsieur Camille, in rather a disturbed frame of mind. It appeared that my long absence had made him anxious. He ventured a polite remonstrance at my going so far all alone.

"But what is there to be afraid of?" I said. "The natives are friendly enough."

"But yes," he replied, "the Kabyles are tranquil; but the 'bêtes sauvages,' they are 'méchants.'"

I said I had always heard that they would not attack a man unless provoked, and had been told, too, that they were only to be found far in the interior.

"Ah, monsieur, you mistake," he answered. "Figure to yourself that Monsieur le Juge de Paix shot two panthers last week within three miles of the town walls."

As I did not want to be saddled with a guide who would be always in the way, I pooh-poohed his notions of danger, but pacified him a little by showing him my revolver, which I always carried.

A few days afterwards I started early to visit a curious ruined village, which had for some time attracted me in the distance by its picturesque situation perched on the summit of a pine clad mountain, which I judged to be about six or seven miles off. This pine forest extended to within thirty or forty yards of the wall—for these hill villages are invariably surrounded by a wall as a defence against neighbouring tribes.

There was not much to see in the village, and I did not care to explore the deserted gourbis, as the native huts are called, knowing how thickly populated they are with the species of insect scientifically known as *cimex vulgaris*, not to speak of the less obnoxious species.

The mosque or kouba attracted me, however, and I determined to explore it. These koubas are to be found in most native villages in Algeria, and serve the double purpose of a place of worship, and a shrine of the holy man (Marabout) of the district. If you imagine a church tower, cut down to about twelve feet from the ground, with a domed roof surmounted by a small iron crescent, and the whole surface covered with a thick coating of whitewash, you have a good idea of what these buildings are like.

I wanted to see the interior, and found that the solid iron-bound door was merely fastened from the outside with a large bolt, which shot into the wall. The inside was not particularly interesting, and it was very musty. The shrine was opposite the door—a quaintly-carved wooden structure built over the tomb. Overhead there was a kind of wooden canopy, from which hung in a ghostly array the votive offerings of the faithful.

Having exhausted the village I began to think of getting back. I had climbed the wall and was sitting on the top idly enjoying the view, when I heard from the edge of the wood below a kind of rustling noise. Thinking it might be a jackal, I dislodged one of the large stones from the wall and half rolled half threw it towards the spot where I heard the noise.

My curiosity was soon satisfied.

There was a sound of branches breaking and out walked a panther, who gazed calmly around him as if taking stock of the surroundings. He evidently saw me, for he suddenly turned tail.

At first I confess I was horribly frightened; but when the animal turned and fled, a reaction set in, and I felt that my prey was escaping me; so I drew my revolver and fired. From a subsequent post mortem examination, it appeared that I had slightly wounded him in the near hind leg.

The animal, growling, faced round and made for me. I pride myself on my readiness of resource. The stories of travellers saving themselves by climbing a tree in similar circumstances flashed in a second through my mind. But where was the tree? Happy thought—the mosque! which was only a few yards distant. It would prove a real sanctuary to me. I silently blessed the marabout, and with all speed made for it. By means of the door, which I had left open, I scrambled to the roof, and pulled myself, by the help of the iron crescent, to the top of the dome, where I sat astraddle, awaiting the panther's pleasure.

Not a moment too soon—a sound of stones falling told me he was negotiating the wall. Immediately after, I heard him walking round

and round the kouba, emitting an occasional growl. For the present I was safe.

I could not see him at first from my exalted position ; but he soon altered his tactics and crouched down a few paces off, where I had a good view of him. He lay like a cat, with his head between his paws, only raising it occasionally to emit a long-drawn growl. I began to feel seriously uneasy ; the beast evidently intended to starve me out. I could not hold on all night. It was getting dark very rapidly. In this country, as you know, there is hardly any twilight. If I only had had my revolver—but I had dropped it in climbing the kouba.

Partly to give me courage, and partly from some vague notion that strange noises will frighten animals, I began to roar out—but with a quavering voice—snatches of songs. The only visible effect my musical efforts had on the panther was to make him wag his head slowly from side to side, as if beating time. It seemed that the brute was mocking me.

In a fit of impatience I unstrapped my field-glasses, and flung them full at his face, fetching him a crack on the snout. This roused the animal. Rearing up, he roared at me, as if in defiance, and made a dash at the mosque. His efforts to reach me were in vain.

All of a sudden he dashed through the open door into the mosque, perhaps hoping to get at me from the inside. Soon I heard a sound of smashing and splintering of wood. The animal was committing sacrilege apparently, and venting his rage on the holy man's shrine. If I could only keep you there, my friend, I thought, we would cry quits.

Keep him there, but how ? A happy thought flashed across my mind. It was, indeed, an inspiration. "I have it," I exclaimed. I began to search my pockets, and found a couple of newspapers. I found also that I had a pocket-volume of Longfellow. With these materials—"to such base uses do we come at last"—I hastily improvised a sort of torch, binding it round with strips torn from my handkerchief. I then poured some of the contents of my brandy-flask over it, and fastened one end of this torch to the strap of my field-glass, and the other end of the strap to the iron crescent. I then lit the torch, and carefully let it down over the doorway.

There was a glorious illumination, which at once attracted the raging animal inside. I could hear him tearing from one side of the mosque to the other. Still the torch would only burn about a minute or so, and I must at once carry out my plan. It was a desperate one, but it was my only chance. I dropped softly to the ground, and shut the door in the panther's face ; to his great discomfiture, as I found afterwards that the door in shutting had banged the torch in the brute's face and singed his whiskers.

There was more to be done yet, though, if I was to get clear away.

I knew that when the torch had burnt itself out the infuriated animal would make short work of the door. I confess my first idea was to have taken to my heels, but I reflected that the brute would probably overtake me before I could get over the village wall, and I thought that panthers, like cats, could see in the dark; besides, the brute would smell me. And then, what a glorious thing it would be to kill a full-grown panther with my own hand!

This I decided to do, and I hit on a scheme. I recovered my revolver, of which only one chamber had been fired, and cautiously stole to the little loophole in the side wall. I could see the animal crouched down among the débris of the shrine at the back of the mosque, gazing fixedly at the expiring torch, and angrily beating the ground with his tail. I took a deliberate aim at his eye and fired. The panther gave a tremendous spring in the air and fell heavily on its side, shot through the brain.

I reached the hotel about ten o'clock, and found Monsieur Camille weeping profusely: perhaps my bill being six days overdue had something to do with his emotion. He seemed overjoyed to see me. "*Ciel—you have returned? A la bonne heure!*" he exclaimed, shaking my hand effusively.

I began, with pardonable pride, to relate my adventure. It was some time before he seemed to understand, and looked at me with a polite air of listening, but without any great show of interest. When he did understand, however, he started up in a great state of excitement, ejaculating phrases of which I could just catch the words, "*Sapristi!*"—"Un panthère!"—"La mosquée!"—"Qu'elle horreur!"—"Mais les Arabes!"

When he had calmed down a little, he explained that the natives were frightfully fanatical, and that I had done a very rash act, which might be attended with unpleasant results. It appeared that the natives would be enraged at the idea of blood, even a panther's, having been shed in a sacred place by an infidel. In fact, it seemed that I, as well as the panther, had been guilty of a grave act of sacrilege. However, there was nothing to be done. I took the hint of my friend Camille, and left for Algiers by the early diligence the next morning.

For some time I heard no more of the adventure. But one morning I received a case, which on being opened proved to contain a panther's skin, together with a letter from M. Camille, informing me that the Arabs had been mad with rage at the desecration of their mosque, and that if they could only have discovered the perpetrator of the terrible deed, his life would certainly have paid the penalty of his temerity.

On the whole I felt glad that I had escaped back to Algiers, and cheated them of their revenge.

E. A. R. B.

IN SUNNY CLIMES.

By CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF
"LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," ETC.



IF the shores of the Mediterranean are matchless, surely the same may be said of the waters of the sea itself. The eye never wearies of gazing upon these blue and green transparencies. The warm sunlight flashes upon them, and at once you have an array of dazzling jewels in the rarest setting. That liquid purple, so intense and tangible, you will not find in the deepest waters of the Atlantic. Almost

we envied the adventurous Maltese as they plunged into the cool waters after silver coins.

We longed to do likewise, but these natives were evidently half fishes, whilst we could pretend to be

nothing more or less than men.

We steamed out of Malta almost with regret. We had not been long enough in the little island to tire of it or find out its monotony. These few hours had been associated with intense sunshine, with quaint streets, with the orange groves and gorgeous blooms of San Antonio, with richly endowed churches and tapestried chambers, tempered by cold crypts and creepy skeletons. We had revelled in the glorious views from the Bastions, undoubtedly some of the most striking in the world; and as much as ever we were impressed with the grandeur of the harbour as we steamed between the forts and put out to sea.

Darkness fell, and the moon rose, and the stars came out.

The piano was brought up on deck, but everyone probably was tired with their day and dissipations in Malta. Dancing flagged at

the end of five minutes. Someone struck up the Boulanger March; but even these lively strains came to an end before the march was half over, and finished up with a hopeless and sudden discord which caused the performer himself to start with horror from his seat, and close the piano for the night.

The next morning found us out of sight of land, crossing the Mediterranean on our way to Brindisi. The day passed uneventfully. Scarcely a sail broke the monotony of the water. The very porpoises kept out of sight and were evidently disporting elsewhere. The small dissipations which marked the hours on deck went on as usual. The Ring and the Bucket, as someone called the exciting game; "after Browning" they kindly explained, because it was as difficult to accomplish the one as to fathom the other. This no doubt was rank heresy; but, from the popularity of the sentiment, it was evident that the passengers numbered few supporters of the Browning Society. Cricket went on "for'ard;" lounging, posing, and mild flirtations in the stern.

Minerva was no more. That is to say, she was in Malta, where, of course, she was very much; no doubt doing her best to circumvent the wicked soldiers. Miss Languish, deprived of this moral restraint, made a dead set at "Dear Tom," and so alarmed the poor creature that he took refuge in the second-class saloon, where he treated all who would listen to him to melancholy tunes on the piccolo. But there was a certain air of determination about Miss Languish which seemed to say that, by hook or by crook, by fair means or foul, by soft arts and seductive blandishments, or by the "hubble, bubble, toil and trouble" of the witches' cauldron, come weal or come woe, she would compass her ends. As both were going out to Australia, she had in her favour all the advantages of what someone has called the dangers of juxtaposition. Philosophers say that if a given woman makes up her mind to marry a given man, he is as hopelessly lost as the poor fly in the spider's web. No wonder then, if this be true, that marriage is sometimes a failure.

All the passengers had, as it were, scarcely begun their journey; we, on the contrary, were about to terminate ours. To-morrow morning we should part from the *Batavia*. Consequently we now looked at life from a different point of view. In the last days, the last hours of a journey, one's emotions undergo a transformation. Everything changes. "All the air a solemn stillness holds." The gilded rainbow fades from our sky. The scene is about to disappear. Something has died or is dying to us. Perhaps we are about to return to grey skies and prosy thoroughfares and black Mondays, wherein men must work in order that women may *not* weep: those, at least, who have fallen victims to the Miss Languishes of the world, or have sisters, cousins and aunts to cater for. Will it be so when the last hour of all shall come; when work is done, and the hands are folded, and the world is passed? In that dread

hour will all change in this mysterious way, and shall we see that in many of our most cherished ambitions we have only been pursuing vain shadows? It will, undoubtedly.

The day passed on to night—our last night on board—and again the moon rose and the stars came out. To-morrow, Sunday, we should land at Brindisi, and bid a long good-bye to the *Batavia*, leaving the good ship to continue her journey to Australia. Dancing to-night was a little more animated. "Dear Tom," who had ventured out of his hiding-place, was captured by Miss Languish, who forthwith began spinning her web. Ere many days he would become hopelessly entangled. Our last game at Euchre was played; mutual regrets were exchanged, in the midst of which, punctually at 10.30, the lights went out. The voice might tremble and be heard, but if the eyes overflowed they could not be seen.

Early the next morning we reached Brindisi. The approach to the town was a gorgeous and magnificent sight, simply from the effect of colouring. The sun had risen with unequalled splendour, flushing sky and sea with a rosy light. The shores of Italy were glowing and golden. The intensity of colouring dazzled one's vision and took captive the imagination. There was no beauty of scenery, no luxuriance of vegetation; but it was not needed: this gorgeous golden glow was sufficient. It was an earthly paradise.

As we steamed up to the town, it looked like a very ordinary Italian town, though perhaps less picturesque than these generally are. A long row of houses stretched down the quay, not enriched with quaint balconies or the bright colours one so often sees. If the truth must be told, they looked rather dirty and dilapidated. It was early morning, but on the quay a small crowd was of course collected, of the usual sort. Dark Italians with flashing eyes, looking lazy and lounging; boys devouring luscious melons, regardless of appearances or anything but the enjoyment of the fruit, with a freedom which, I believe, we envied, and would have imitated if we could have done so undetected.

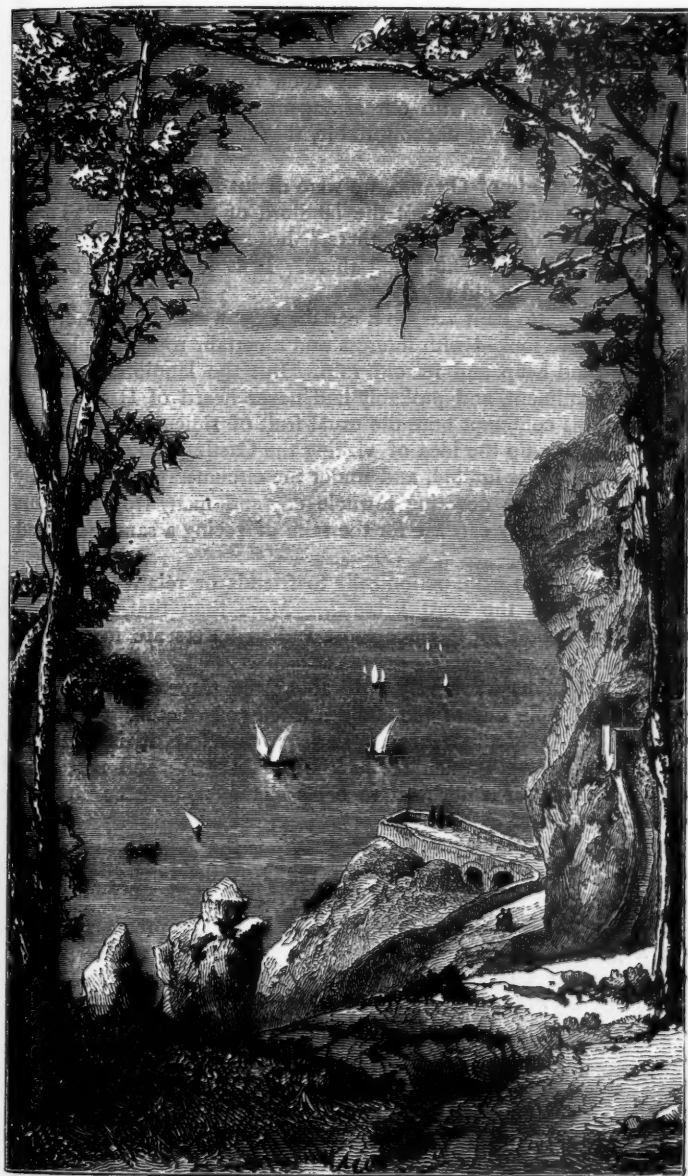
We were some time getting thoroughly alongside, but at last it was accomplished and landing became possible.

Before finally leaving the *Batavia* we went on shore to reconnoitre, as Robinson Crusoe would have said, and to ascertain what sort of a pied-à-terre we should find during our short sojourn in Brindisi.

And first of all we found that we should have to change our preconcerted plans. One very often has to do so in this world, and with many a heartache. In the present instance it gave us no very great unhappiness, for it was merely changing one charming route or another perhaps equally so. We had wished to run down to Otranto, gaze upon its Castle, and recall the scenes of that mysterious, though never specially interesting tale which has a place in childhood's recollections; yet never half so thrilling as the mysteries



VESUVIUS, FROM NAPLES



ON THE WAY TO SORRENTO.

of Udolpho, or the old English Baron, with all its ghosts and creepy corridors.

Then we had wished to visit Naples, return to Brindisi, and sail up the Adriatic to Venice. This we soon found to be impossible. Boats would not fit in with our arrangements; and the journey to Naples was so long and uncomfortable, that to take it a second time was out of the question.

As for the Castle of Otranto, we were dissuaded from attempting it by the emphatic language of the landlord of the hotel. "There is absolutely nothing to see there," he remarked energetically. "I never heard of anyone going there. It is nothing but a sand heap crowned by an old ruin."

Nevertheless, to us it was, to a certain extent, classic ground, and we should have looked with interest and a certain romantic pleasure upon the sand heap and its old ruin. But the landlord evidently despised sentiment, and probably had never heard of Horace Walpole; and his contempt bore the usual fruit of ridicule upon a weak mind—we gave up the idea of visiting the Castle of Otranto. Our time was somewhat limited, and under the circumstances it scarcely seemed worth while devoting a whole day and many tropical hours in a stifling railway carriage for the sake of seeing a sand heap and an old ruin.

All who have to write periodically to friends or relatives in India are familiar with the word Brindisi. More than that, they have almost an affection for it, since most Indian letters are marked for this route.

But most of us know very little about the place itself, and probably nine people out of ten could not tell you whether it is on the Adriatic or the Mediterranean. Perhaps, therefore, it is fortunate that there is not very much to be known about it; and that ignorance in the matter is not fatal to one's character, or necessary to a finished education.

This Brindisi, the guide books tell us, was the Brundisium of the ancients, the greatest naval station the Romans possessed in the Adriatic. Thus its history goes far into the past.

We saw few signs of antiquity about it in the present. There was a great deal that was modern, neglected and uninteresting; very little that was ancient. If it possesses any Roman relics or antiquities, we did not see them; they did not appear on the surface, and it was too hot to search them out. Besides, Roman antiquities are so much one like another. It is only in such a place as Rome that you can get up the true spirit and emotion supposed to be inspired by a Roman antiquity; and when once you have seen Rome and know it by heart, you have seen all. For you the chapter of Roman antiquities is closed. You may find the ruins of an old wall here, the remains of an ancient bath there, the fragments of a once cold and creepy crypt somewhere else, herring-boned in masonry,

sepulchral in aspect, damp and mouldy in atmosphere; all as orthodox as possible; but it is only a pretence when all is said and done.

On landing, we found we could be taken in at the hotel on the quay. Yet it was so full that we had to wait an hour for our room. Here, after due debate with the landlord, we finally settled our plans. This was to give up Otranto; to abandon the Adriatic and Venice; to take the evening train for Naples, and spend the remainder of our time in visiting the more famous towns and cities which lay in our direct route homewards.

For we had none too much time before us. Mauleverer was due at his shooting-box in Scotland at the beginning of October, where he had arranged a tolerably large gathering; but he decided to give himself an extra fortnight, provided his brother would consent to play host during the fortnight's additional absence. This was satisfactorily arranged by telegraph: an advantage we possess over our ancestors who were born in the early days of the nineteenth century. What advantages our "heirs, successors and assigns" will possess over us a hundred years hence, probably neither the Witch of Endor, nor the witches in Macbeth, nor the greatest witch of the present day, would venture to disclose.

We went back to the steamer, settled up our accounts, made our adieux, which, though without tears, were not without regrets, and left the *Batavia*—probably for ever. About ninety additional passengers were expected by the mail train; every berth on board was taken; every seat at every table large and small would be filled; the vessel would be crowded; the Babel appalling. And on this account, if on no other, our regret at leaving was certainly not an unmixed sorrow.

Our first visit was to the post-office, a very unofficial-looking building, to which we were conducted by an hotel porter. Here we found letters from friends in England, which were given to us in a manner as unofficial as the building. We were handed a batch of letters of at least three hundred in number, and were begged to make our selection.

It was all very right to repose this confidence in us; but the post-office clerk could scarcely be a Lavater; and even the great physiognomist was not infallible; and the practice is not to be recommended for imitation. We found about a dozen letters awaiting us, and when we had put them apart the clerk did not even trouble to look at them and ascertain that in deed and in truth they were ours.

Brindisi owes its present prosperity to the fact that it is the point of departure for the Indian mails. It ought, therefore, to be grateful to this little island of ours. I don't much think it is so, for we found the hotel abominably dear and the cab fares extortionate. The only mark of supreme deference we received as Englishmen was from the above-mentioned postal clerk, whose conduct in handing us the

of Udolpho, or the old English Baron, with all its ghosts and creepy corridors.

Then we had wished to visit Naples, return to Brindisi, and sail up the Adriatic to Venice. This we soon found to be impossible. Boats would not fit in with our arrangements; and the journey to Naples was so long and uncomfortable, that to take it a second time was out of the question.

As for the Castle of Otranto, we were dissuaded from attempting it by the emphatic language of the landlord of the hotel. "There is absolutely nothing to see there," he remarked energetically. "I never heard of anyone going there. It is nothing but a sand heap crowned by an old ruin."

Nevertheless, to us it was, to a certain extent, classic ground, and we should have looked with interest and a certain romantic pleasure upon the sand heap and its old ruin. But the landlord evidently despised sentiment, and probably had never heard of Horace Walpole; and his contempt bore the usual fruit of ridicule upon a weak mind—we gave up the idea of visiting the Castle of Otranto. Our time was somewhat limited, and under the circumstances it scarcely seemed worth while devoting a whole day and many tropical hours in a stifling railway carriage for the sake of seeing a sand heap and an old ruin.

All who have to write periodically to friends or relatives in India are familiar with the word Brindisi. More than that, they have almost an affection for it, since most Indian letters are marked for this route.

But most of us know very little about the place itself, and probably nine people out of ten could not tell you whether it is on the Adriatic or the Mediterranean. Perhaps, therefore, it is fortunate that there is not very much to be known about it; and that ignorance in the matter is not fatal to one's character, or necessary to a finished education.

This Brindisi, the guide books tell us, was the Brundisium of the ancients, the greatest naval station the Romans possessed in the Adriatic. Thus its history goes far into the past.

We saw few signs of antiquity about it in the present. There was a great deal that was modern, neglected and uninteresting; very little that was ancient. If it possesses any Roman relics or antiquities, we did not see them; they did not appear on the surface, and it was too hot to search them out. Besides, Roman antiquities are so much one like another. It is only in such a place as Rome that you can get up the true spirit and emotion supposed to be inspired by a Roman antiquity; and when once you have seen Rome and know it by heart, you have seen all. For you the chapter of Roman antiquities is closed. You may find the ruins of an old wall here, the remains of an ancient bath there, the fragments of a once cold and creepy crypt somewhere else, herring-boned in masonry,

sepulchral in aspect, damp and mouldy in atmosphere; all as orthodox as possible; but it is only a pretence when all is said and done.

On landing, we found we could be taken in at the hotel on the quay. Yet it was so full that we had to wait an hour for our room. Here, after due debate with the landlord, we finally settled our plans. This was to give up Otranto; to abandon the Adriatic and Venice; to take the evening train for Naples, and spend the remainder of our time in visiting the more famous towns and cities which lay in our direct route homewards.

For we had none too much time before us. Mauleverer was due at his shooting-box in Scotland at the beginning of October, where he had arranged a tolerably large gathering; but he decided to give himself an extra fortnight, provided his brother would consent to play host during the fortnight's additional absence. This was satisfactorily arranged by telegraph: an advantage we possess over our ancestors who were born in the early days of the nineteenth century. What advantages our "heirs, successors and assigns" will possess over us a hundred years hence, probably neither the Witch of Endor, nor the witches in Macbeth, nor the greatest witch of the present day, would venture to disclose.

We went back to the steamer, settled up our accounts, made our adieux, which, though without tears, were not without regrets, and left the *Batavia*—probably for ever. About ninety additional passengers were expected by the mail train; every berth on board was taken; every seat at every table large and small would be filled; the vessel would be crowded; the Babel appalling. And on this account, if on no other, our regret at leaving was certainly not an unmixed sorrow.

Our first visit was to the post-office, a very unofficial-looking building, to which we were conducted by an hotel porter. Here we found letters from friends in England, which were given to us in a manner as unofficial as the building. We were handed a batch of letters of at least three hundred in number, and were begged to make our selection.

It was all very right to repose this confidence in us; but the post-office clerk could scarcely be a Lavater; and even the great physiognomist was not infallible; and the practice is not to be recommended for imitation. We found about a dozen letters awaiting us, and when we had put them apart the clerk did not even trouble to look at them and ascertain that in deed and in truth they were ours.

Brindisi owes its present prosperity to the fact that it is the point of departure for the Indian mails. It ought, therefore, to be grateful to this little island of ours. I don't much think it is so, for we found the hotel abominably dear and the cab fares extortionate. The only mark of supreme deference we received as Englishmen was from the above-mentioned postal clerk, whose conduct in handing us the

whole of the letters at the Poste Restante was, in spite of imprudence a very delicate and pretty way of intimating that an Englishman, like Cæsar's wife, was above reproach. (N.B. for the benefit of the above postal clerk. There *are*, unfortunately, exceptions to this rule.)

There is nothing to see in Brindisi. It sustained a siege in the days of the Romans: a siege organised and carried out by Cæsar against Pompey; but the sleepy, unenterprising inhabitants have kept no traces of this; not so much as a pile of skulls and cross bones, or even a few stones sprinkled with the blood of Pompey. It is a great oversight on their part; and the sooner they discover and arrange a few of these interesting Roman remains, the better it will be for the prosperity of the town and the happiness of deluded visitors.

Just outside the post-office was the market. Although it was Sunday, the market was spread. It was a very poor affair, without any of the picturesqueness of so many of the Italian markets. Often their fruit and vegetable stalls are quite studies in art and colouring. There was nothing of the kind in Brindisi. The streets were dirty, the houses looked dilapidated and poverty-stricken, the men and women were not at all handsome; there was a general air of neglect and indifference about the whole place.

There was very little to see in the place. The ruins of the circular church of San Giovanni, with its faded frescos, said to have belonged to the Knights Templars. The fine harbours, with the ancient dykes, constructed of course by the inevitable Cæsar. The marble column near the uninteresting cathedral, with its base adorned with the heads of mythical sea monsters. The castle, with its round towers, commenced by Frederick II., who was crowned in the cathedral and then married Yolande in 1225.

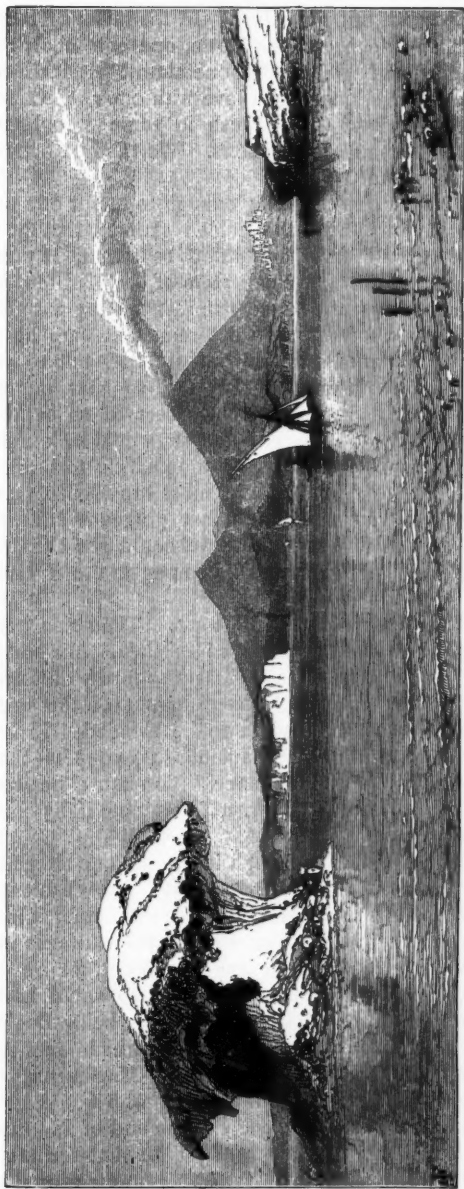
Not far from the cathedral is shown the house in which Virgil is said to have died, nineteen years before the Christian era. One naturally gazes at it as the most interesting object to be seen in Brindisi; but, at the same time, one looks upon the whole thing very much as a legend; and it may be that the house did not come into existence for many a century after Virgil's death.

So the attractions of Brindisi being soon exhausted, we took a short drive into the open country. All beauty of scenery and vegetation consisted in vineyards, of which one has such an abundance in Southern Italy. To the eye unfamiliar with these signs and symbols of a southern clime, nothing is more charming, more singular and startling, than these endless vineyards—this inexhaustible supply of grapes. They are equally picturesque and romantic. Nothing can be more so than to see a group of young men and maidens leaving work at the end of the day, their brows entwined with the graceful leaves and tendrils of the vine, their handsome faces and picturesque costumes according so well with the beauty of the scene, whilst the

broad, gorgeous light of day has given place to the softer shades of evening, and lovelit glances and tender tones accord with the sentiment of the hour.

Not that we saw anything of all this to-day, though we did other days. There was no subdued light, but a very full and burning sun. We journeyed over white roads inches thick in dust. There was no shade or shelter from the glare.

Presently we stopped at a vineyard and alighted. An Englishwoman came forth from the very prosy-looking house, and conducted us amongst the vines, which grew terrace above terrace. Tall vines, interlacing each other, climbed up long poles, very much like our hop-gardens in England. Most of the grapes had been plucked for wine. Of those that remained, some were curious in shape, very long and narrow, and therefore, our interesting



VESUVIUS, FROM CAPRI.

guide informed us, called ladies' fingers. These grapes are for the wine press, not for eating. In the midst of the vineyard was a deep well, in which, far, far down, one saw one's reflection. It looked so cool and inviting that one almost felt inclined to plunge in, and, like Narcissus, falling in love with one's reflection, disappear for ever, and begin existence afresh in some "cool grot and mossy cell" under those sleeping waters. We thought better of it, and remained above ground.

It was quite charming enough to tempt one to do so. This wonderful atmosphere, this golden glamour that sat upon all, intoxicated one with a dreamy, voluptuous sensation. It was all so different from the blue skies and blue waters of the Mediterranean; so delicious to wander about the terraces amidst the fragrant grapes. They had not all been plucked, and what remained were at our disposal. If an especial bunch tempted one, we had but to put forth a hand and gather it. It was singular, too, to hear our guide discoursing in fluent English, and somehow seemed as out of place here, in this remote part of Italy, as a vineyard would look in St. Paul's Churchyard. It was equally curious and unromantic to hear her declare that she preferred the prosiest and most crowded streets of London to the loveliest vineyards, the most gorgeous sunsets Italy could boast. From the higher ground we could see the harbour, and the blue waters of the Adriatic shimmering in the distance—waters that were to know us no more.

We went back to the town. Time was passing; the afternoon shadows were beginning to lengthen. We had a long night-journey before us, and it was necessary to fortify ourselves for the ordeal.

For in Italy, and especially out of the ordinary beaten tracks, these night-journeys are to be avoided. It is not travelling made easy. Sleeping cars, fauteuils-lits, coupés—these luxuries are conspicuous by their absence. You must be content with ordinary carriages, and think yourself fortunate if by chance you find one in part empty.

We were lucky enough in finding one altogether so. Nevertheless, it was a most tedious journey. The cushions were hard, the train rattled and rumbled and jolted. Whether it is the ordinary habit of the trains to do this or whether the carriages were badly screwed up on this occasion, deponent sayeth not, for he does not know. The effect was the same. A Scotchman would have roused up the next morning with a "sore head;" we, being English, called it a headache, but of that splitting sort which sees sparks and flashes of lightning in the atmosphere. Mauleverer, on the other hand, belongs to that irritating genus who would go through a century of fatigue and smile serenely at the end of it. Once, up in the wilds of the land, for a whole fortnight he shot for ten hours a-day over hill and moor, and would have gone on for several weeks longer, had not his companions given in and "gone South," very much the worse for

wear, and he, not caring to be left to solitude and the tortures of a burdened conscience, went also.

It was a journey of twelve or fourteen hours from Brindisi to Naples. When night passed away, and the sun rose, the whole country was a vision of inexhaustible beauty. The magnificence and luxuriance of the scene atoned for the barrenness of the ancient city of Brundisium. Glorious hills rose in every direction, chain upon chain. We passed through an infinity of vineyards, the grapes hanging in richest clusters. In these early hours the world was sleeping, and there was nowhere sign or token of living being. But the sun shot upwards, and the world awoke, and groups of men and women began to be seen on the long white roads, going to their daily work.

And then, by and by, as the train wound in and out amidst the hills and the vineyards, up rose Vesuvius. What is it that always excites and inspires one at the sight of this burning mountain—beautiful in its cruelty? There it for ever is, a pillar of fire and smoke, sending forth flames and black clouds, and, occasionally, streams of molten lava that lick the earth with living tongues of torture, and volumes of ashes that have buried cities and people in their pitiless fury. It has cost more lives, more misery, than the greatest battle that ever was fought. It has come down upon its victims like a thief in the night, and hurled them, all unawares, in its living tomb. We know not from one day to another that it may not repeat and exceed its worst ravages. Nay, some day it will surely do so. And yet we love it, and point to it proudly, and declare that it is one of the charms and glories of Naples, and that Naples would not be Naples without it.

At night, when darkness falls, and the red flames show out and seem to caress the sky, we gaze upon it with irresistible fascination. Its very silence makes it portentous. A sense of mystery surrounds it, as unfathomable as it is ever present. It gives rise to emotions that even Longfellow could only dimly realise by a night's devotion, spent in solitude upon the burning hill.

For our own part, a shorter visit, by night or day, seemed sufficient for any ordinary mortal. At night it is more weird and mysterious than by day. If you are mounted your horse pursues an almost invisible path. The starlit canopy above, where possibly a full moon may be following her course, seems a direct rebuke to the angry fiery flames issuing like living tongues from the mouth of the crater. It is a less beautiful excursion, but almost more effective, without the full moon, as the darkness is more intense, the sense of mystery greater. For, argue as we will, the burning mountain seems almost a miracle in Nature: an abnormal condition of things to which we do not grow accustomed by familiarity. But it is one of those things that must be seen to be realised; like the blue of the Mediterranean, the entrance to the Golden Horn, the vast tracks of a desert, the gigantic vegetation of the Far West.

But if the path is almost invisible, your horse knows his way blindfold, and neither errs nor stumbles. Besides that, you are not alone, for the landlord of the little inn at Pompeii is probably with you—he or some other equally trustworthy guide.

After a long and slow ascent, you reach the mouth of the crater. It is horrible to contemplate. As you gaze downward, shuddering, an almost insane desire seizes you to hurl yourself into that yawning gulf. A far-off hissing sound seems to penetrate your ears, as if this were purgatory and the souls of the condemned were in torment. Flame and smoke and a sulphureous vapour appear to rage and contend for victory. You are blinded and choked. A shower of ashes, an extra volume of cloud, send you backward with an exclamation of dismay. You feel as if another eruption were about to happen—another Pompeii to be buried in hopeless ruin.

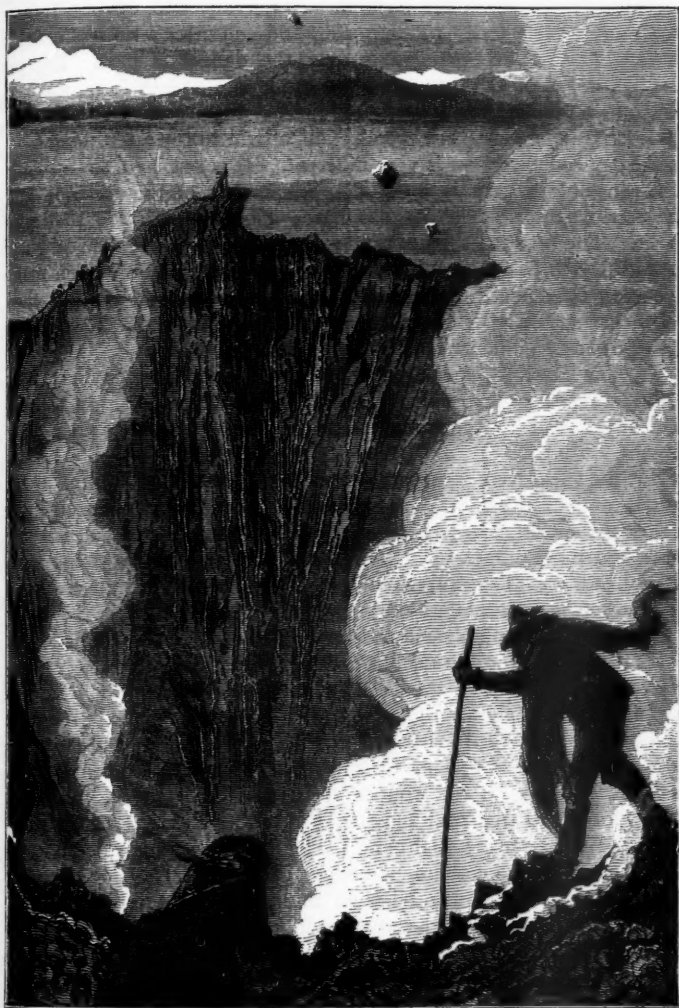
Your guide laughs at your nervousness. In his case familiarity has bred contempt. To him, that which may happen at any moment never happens at all. The long-expected passes into the regions of the impossible. He fears no eruption, no living tomb, no buried city. Though all his earthly possessions are at the foot of this sometime holocaust to Nemesis, he sleeps as calmly in his bed as though death and danger did not at all times over-shadow him! I suppose we are all alike in this matter, minus the few exceptions who prove the rule. This must be why, to the old man of sixty, even death itself, the only certain thing in life, seems more visionary, farther off, than it does to the youth of twenty.

As you gaze into this awful gulf—though you cannot see far down—suddenly a stream of lava hisses upwards and runs down the hillside. Fortunately, it is not on your side. But again you exclaim, and again your guide manifests his superior indifference. Then he manages to embed a coin in a piece of the lava whilst it is yet hot, and by-and-by, if he has been successful, he will present it to you as a souvenir of your visit.

As a remembrance it is superfluous. No one who has mounted Vesuvius by night will ever forget the sensation. You seem to stand face to face with death. At any moment you may be overtaken by the most horrible of fates. Your grave, like that of Moses, shall be unknown. But you are fascinated, and you gaze and gaze into the fiery furnace, the yawning gulf, the black pit of destruction. Instinctively a terrible verse rings in your ears, and you pray to escape the doom: "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

You find that it is a greater ordeal to go down again than it was to come up. If you walk, you grope and stumble, and your footing seems uncertain. You cannot divest yourself of a sensation that the avenging mountain has only delayed your fate with a refined cruelty. With every step it seems about to open and swallow you up. Imagine such a moment: far worse even than that moment when at sea you behold your vessel sinking and the waters closing around you.

If, on the other hand, you are still on horseback, the sensation is almost more uncomfortable and much more tiring. The patient



LOOKING INTO THE CRATER.

beast puts on an action very much like that of a camel labouring under a burden. In the darkness, you seem everlastingly about to pitchpole over a precipice. The sea stretched out before you is an

illimitable space given over to chaos. A few lights twinkling upon it here and there look like lamps of another world waiting to light you on your journey from this.

At length you reach the bottom. A nervous and devout Italian would ejaculate a fervent Paternoster, and you utter a no less earnest thanksgiving. The excursion is over, the danger is past. You do not like deeds of darkness, and you are glad. It had to be done, it ought to be done; but it really required a little courage. All this, no doubt, adds zest to the recollection, charm to the afterthought.

By day the excursion is very different. It is not half so thrilling. The sense of mystery is lost. The fascination of the horrible and the terrible and the portentous has evaporated with the shades of night. The mountain is not much more awe-inspiring than a ghost at mid-day. But ghosts are wise; wiser than we are. We often make mistakes, they never do. They never appear at mid-day, for they know that such a visit would be of none effect. They never waste their power and influence.

So, comparatively speaking, going up Vesuvius by daylight is a very tame and ordinary affair: especially in these days when there is a royal road to the crater, and the ascent is made shamefully easy.

But then you have a reward of another kind. All round and about you is one of the most glorious views in the world. Surely it is almost matchless. As you ascend higher and higher, so you become more and more impressed. The view expands only to show forth fresh beauties. That black column of smoke above you enchains your attention far less than the surrounding magnificence.

Far, far above you is such a canopy of Heaven as in England you never dream of: for you cannot dream of what you have never conceived: a blue vaulted dome, high and ethereal, in which rides a burning, molten, glowing, golden sun. In this rarified air the heat exhilarates you. Here you can perfectly imagine that there have been, that there are, sun worshippers. You pity the benighted heathen, but you do not wonder at them. What object in nature is so glorious as that health-giving, warmth-bestowing, ever-travelling globe? His presence is light and life; his absence seems death itself.

Light and life he certainly is to-day, gilding everything with magic unutterable. A fairy world lies around you, renowned in history, extolled in song. The charm of sadness is there equally with the tangible joys of a full nervous existence. And these sad recollections of the past are as valuable as is water to a landscape, beauty to a woman, voice to the nightingale. Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought, and the luxury of pain enters into our most impressive moods. Thus it is certain that if Naples would not be Naples without Vesuvius, so Vesuvius in its turn would lose half its charm were it not for the shadow of sorrow which surrounds it: the magic words of *Herculaneum* and *Pompeii*.

At your feet lie the ruins of Pompeii, which year by year are being more and more opened up. By-and-by there will be nothing left to discover, and many an Othello will then find his occupation gone. A great plain stretches before you, bounded by a chain of hills. These stand out wonderfully against the background of that blue sky. Often they seem to reflect its colour, and a purple mist, beautiful and romantic, gently veils them. The plain is full of life; rich vegetation alternated by towns and villages. Lovely villas nestle on the hill-sides, with gardens that are simply earthly paradises. Here Romeos and Juliettes might live and love for ever.

Long white roads lead towards Naples, and Naples itself sleeps in the far distance. All the hum of the noisy city cannot reach you here. To your left stretches the great Bay, its waters gently washing these classic shores. These waters are of the deepest ultramarine, and they flash and flame in the sunlight. White-winged boats, pure as the wings of a celestial visitant, are gliding to and fro, wafted by the gentlest of breezes. Beyond all lies the Island of Capri, rising upwards with all its beauty of form. Everything else that is beautiful about it is lost from here. You must imagine its luxuriant vegetation, the white foam of the gently breaking waves as they wash its base; the clinging vines, the drooping creepers that decorate its gardens. A lovely haze, now purple, now golden, almost always veils this Capri. For centuries it has been the delight of artists, the home of romance. For here you may find nature in her diversified moods: rich luxuriance side by side with wild and rugged grandeur; gently sloping shores contrasted by precipitous rocks that plunge boldly, unbrokenly, into the sea. Its vineyards yield grapes for the celebrated wine of the country, and its orange-groves perfume the air.

Close to it, separated only by a little sea, lies Sorrento, with its fair women, its lovely walks, its broken picturesque archways, its deep ravines, its frequent torrents. Sorrento has been celebrated from all time. Its plains, surrounded by undulating hills, are fertile as those of Eden—and surely as beautiful. Vineyards and orange-groves intermingle their charms and perfume; the delicate pomegranate waves side by side with the no less sweet but less fruitful acacia.

All this you may see, and much more you may imagine, from your vantage ground of Vesuvius. But, by day or by night, once on the summit, that yawning chasm will claim your attention, and, if you have a vivid imagination, excite your awe. As you gaze upon it and upon the ruins far below, insensibly your mind will lose itself in the bygone ages. A vision will rise up before you. The sun is suddenly shut out from the sky. The air is darkened. Tongues of flame, streams of molten lava cast a lurid glare upon all. An avalanche of cinders appears to fall from the sky. People hurrying in the streets of Pompeii are overtaken. Some gain the shore and put

out to sea, which is tempestuous and agitated. But too many find a horrible death in the midst of their vigorous life. They are buried in a living tomb, to be discovered eighteen centuries later, charred and petrified. And after all that time, pity and sympathy are still aroused, and the flesh creeps and the nerves thrill at the awful doom.

Was it destroyed for its wickedness, like the Cities of the Plain? Or was it simply an act of nature guided by an unerring Hand, carrying with it a mercy, which we have no right to doubt was there, simply because we cannot raise the veil which separates us from the infinite and confines our vision? For here we see through a glass darkly; and only because we are unable to trace the end from the beginning in the life of a nation, individually or collectively, is so much that now happens to us apparently full of contradiction and hard to be understood.



À RIVEDERCI.

So I shall meet thee elsewhere,
Small matter were it near or far;
To me you still were fairest fair,
Till time the crystal gates unbar.
Since in the bygone days of golden weather—
Sped all too soon beneath a cloudless sky—
We learnt afresh the sweetness of together
Unsorrored by the sadness of good-bye.

So I may greet thee, whatsoe'er
The manner of your greeting be;
Some lingered sweetness yet shall fare,
For old sake's sake to you and me.
And ever, though its joy be fraught with sorrow,
Some torch of hope may light a beacon-ray,
To mark the dawning of a brighter morrow,
And teach our hearts the meaning of to-day.

P. SHAW JEFFREY.

THE SHAPES THAT DREAMS MAY TAKE.

IT is fully understood that many most interesting and curious dreams are yet but a continuation in sleep of those methods of mental exertion to which the dreamer is accustomed. Other cases there are in which the powers of memory or of insight, dormant or latent in the waking hours, are strangely stirred or exalted during the reign of slumber. Yet there remain certain instances, as well authenticated as any other incidents of human life, which cannot be fully explained by any of these theories. In this paper we desire to tell a few stories of dreams belonging to this last class, to suggest any explanation which may seem worthy of the reader's consideration, and to call attention to specially inexplicable points.

We will begin with some cases which have actually been elucidated in British law-courts, commencing with one recorded at a date when, it must be remembered, the belief in witchcraft was strong, and scores of people were burned or hanged on evidence which would now do no more than consign whoever tendered it to the doom of an insane asylum.

In the year 1695, a Mr. Stockden was robbed and murdered in his own house in the parish of Cripplegate. There was reason to believe that his assailants were four in number. Suspicion fell on a man named Maynard, but he succeeded at first in clearing himself. Soon afterwards, a Mrs. Greenwood voluntarily came forward and declared that the murdered man had visited her in a dream, and had shown her a house in Thames Street, saying that one of the murderers lived there. In a second dream he displayed to her a portrait of Maynard, calling her attention to a mole on the side of his face (she had never seen the man), and instructing her concerning an acquaintance who would be, he said, willing to betray him. Following up this information, Maynard was committed to prison, where he confessed his crime and impeached three accomplices. It was not easy to trace these men, but Mr. Stockden, the murdered man, again opportunely appeared in Mrs. Greenwood's dreams, giving information which led to the arrest of the whole gang, who then freely confessed, and were finally executed. The story is related by the curate of Cripplegate, and "witnessed" by Dr. Sharp, then Bishop of York.

On this story, be it remarked that Mrs. Greenwood's dreams only verified suspicions already aroused. Maynard had been suspected at first: her dream brought home the guilt to him. It did not deal with his accomplices until Maynard, in his turn, had implicated them.

A somewhat similar incident came before a legal tribunal nearly a

century afterwards, when two Highlanders were arraigned for the murder of an English soldier in a wild and solitary mountain district known as "the Spital of Glenshee." In the course of the "proof for the Crown," to use the phrase of Scottish law, another Highlander, one Alexander McPherson, deposed that on one night an apparition appeared to come to his bedside, and announced itself as the murdered soldier, Davies, and described the precise spot where his bones would be found, requesting McPherson to search for and bury them. He fulfilled but the first part of the behest, whereupon the dream or apparition came back, repeated it, and called its murderers by their names.

It appears that, with the strangely stern common-sense which in Scotland exists side by side with the strongest imaginative power, the prisoners were acquitted principally on account of this evidence, whose "visionary" nature threw discredit on the whole proceedings. One difficulty lay in the possibility of communication between the murdered man and the dreamer, since the one spoke only English and the other nothing but Gaelic! Years afterwards, however, when both the accused men were dead, their law agent admitted confidentially that he had no doubt of their guilt.

Singularly enough, a story strikingly similar in many of its details found its way before a criminal tribunal in our own century.

In the remote and sequestered Highland region of Assynt, Sutherland, a rustic wedding and merry-making came off in the spring of 1830. At this festivity there figured an itinerant pedlar named Murdoch Grant, who from that occasion utterly disappeared. A month afterwards, a farm-servant, passing a lonely mountain lake, observed a dead body in the water, and on its being drawn ashore, the features of the missing pedlar were recognised. He had been robbed, and had met his death by violence. The sheriff of the district, a Mr. Lumsden, investigated the affair without any result—in his searches being aided by a well-educated young man of the neighbourhood, one Hugh Macleod, ostensibly a schoolmaster, but then without employment.

One day the Sheriff chancing to call at the local post-office, Macleod's name, probably owing to the part he was taking in these investigations, came into the conversation, and the postmaster casually remarked that he should not have thought Macleod was so well off—he having recently changed a ten pound note at his shop. Mr. Lumsden's suspicions were aroused by this, and on his asking Macleod a few questions on the matter, he proved the young man to be untruthful. Therefore he put him under arrest, and caused his home to be searched. But none of the pedlar's property being found there, and no other suspicious circumstance transpiring, he was about to be released, when a tailor named Kenneth Fraser came forward with the following extraordinary story.

In his sleep he declared that the Macleods' cottage was presented

to his mind, and that a voice said to him in Gaelic, "The merchant's pack is lying in a cairn of stones, in a hole near their house." The directions given in this dream were carried out by the authorities : articles belonging to Grant were discovered, and the murdered man's stockings were presently found in Macleod's possession. He was accordingly charged with the crime. Kenneth Fraser formulated the evidence of his dream with great firmness and consistency. Macleod was condemned and executed, but not before making a full confession of his guilt.

Here again, as in the case of Mrs. Greenwood, we may notice that the dream is only revealed after suspicion had been already aroused. Fraser was a boon companion of Macleod's, and it has been suggested that in their carousings he got some hint of his comrade's terrible secret. A somewhat similar explanation might serve to account for McPherson's dream of the murdered English soldier, and even the antique visions of Mrs. Greenwood. The form of a dream was a convenient one in which either to veil a guilty complicity—or in the case of the Highlanders to escape that imputation of being an "informer" which is so hateful to the Celtic heart.

There is, however, an equally modern and less remote instance of a similar sort. In 1828, in Suffolk, Maria Martin was slain by her false lover—a crime known in sensational literature as "The Murder in the Red Barn." The stepmother of the deceased (says Mr. Chambers in his "Book of Days") gave testimony on the trial that she had received in a dream that knowledge of the situation of the body of the victim which led to the detection of the murderer.

The late Mr. Serjeant Cox, at a meeting of the Psychological Society in the year 1876, narrated a remarkable case which had come within his own experience in which dreams had played an important part, and the evidence for which he had himself heard given on oath in open Court.

A murder had been committed in Somersetshire. A farmer had disappeared and was not to be found. Two different men, living in different villages, some distance from where the farmer had disappeared, both had a dream upon the same night, and stated the particulars to the local magistrates. They said they had dreamed on that particular night that the body was lying in a well in the farm-yard. No well was known to be there at all, so the two men were laughed at. Some persons, however, went to the yard, and although there was no appearance of a well, they at last found one under some manure, and the body was in it : then, of course, on the principle of the proverb, "He who hides can find," the public began to suspect the two men themselves. But it was finally proved that the farmer had been murdered by his own two nephews, who had afterwards disposed of his body thus. Before these dreams, the dreamers had known nothing about the well in the yard. The nephews were hanged for their crime.

One would ask many questions anent this case—such as : Were these two dreamers conversant with the locality or with the nephews ? Did they have any prior knowledge of each other ? The lawyers, of course, were conducting a criminal case and not a scientific inquiry. One cannot help wondering how much evidence of this sort is tendered to the detective police—and whether it is always duly investigated. One readily understands that much of such dubious testimony is suppressed at its very source from fear of ridicule on the one hand or of suspicion on the other.

We have given these instances first, simply because they have been exposed to all the tests by which evidence is usually sifted.

We will now pass on to some of a different stamp, yet also attested by dates, proper names, etc.

In May, 1812, Mr. Spencer Perceval, Prime Minister of England, was shot in the lobby of the House of Commons, by one Bellingham.

It was claimed that eight days before the assassination, it was foreseen in a dream by a gentleman, a Mr. Williams, living near Truro, in Cornwall. The story has been often told, sometimes carelessly, sometimes with added "effects." We shall give the version of a gentleman whose father was with the dreamer at the date of his dream, as corrected by the version of another friend, who frequently heard the story from the lips of the dreamer himself, when in advanced age.

Mr. Williams, his brother and his partner, were, in the early part of May, 1812, visiting their mines in the Eastern part of Cornwall. Mr. Williams had lately sent his son, Michael (afterwards M.P. for the County), to London to confer with the Government respecting the duty on foreign copper. One morning, Mr. Williams, when driving with his friends, remarked that on the previous night he had had a singular dream of being in the lobby of the House of Commons, and seeing a tall man shoot a short one in the left side. He repeated this dream so often that his companions were rather annoyed. When he himself told the story in after years, he added that the shot was fired as from behind his shoulder, and that he heard an usher say that the murdered man was Mr. Perceval—that he had debated with his sons on the propriety of his going to London and warning the minister, but that they had dissuaded him, which he ever afterwards regretted. He added that it was eight days before the murder that he had this dream. His son, Michael, was in a Committee room opening off the lobby when the murder took place, and returned straight home, where his father, the moment he saw him, exclaimed that he knew the news he had brought. When the old gentleman went to London, he sought for portraits of the assassin and his victim, but was not satisfied with the first he saw of the former, as the hero of his dream had "basket buttons" on his coat. Presently he found a print in which this detail was correctly portrayed. Mr. Williams was generally considered a very practical and unimaginative man.

The murderer, Bellingham, in his confession, owned that the murder had been fully conceived in his own mind for fully a fortnight before the deed was committed.

Is it possible that some "rapport" was established between Bellingham and Mr. Williams, by the presence of Michael Williams in London—and that the dream was a kind of "thought transference?"

We will now adduce an instance where a dream was connected with the saving of a life.

A lady, whose full name and address were given with the original version of the story, had a young servant who was deaf and dumb. The girl fell into ill-health and it was thought desirable that she should have a change, but she was most reluctant to leave her mistress. One Tuesday morning, after taking a breakfast tray to a bedroom, she was seen no more. The household was in great distress and alarm. The neighbouring woods were searched, and a reach of the canal was let off. Nothing was heard of her all Wednesday and Thursday. On Friday morning, the superintendent of police, who had, of course, had full information of the disappearance, called at the house, and saying that he had received an impression that the girl was hidden somewhere on the premises, requested to make a minute search. He had never been in the house before, but went straight down to a certain cellar, and there to an open flue, wherein they found the girl jammed fast. The opening from the flue to the cellar was not above eighteen inches high, and how the girl had forced herself up it remained mysterious. They had to get bricklayers' tools and dig down the bricks before they could get her out.

Mr. Wedgwood (one of the family of the famous potter) made particular inquiries into this case. Two or three years having elapsed, the police superintendent chanced to have died. But his son remembered the case quite well. He said his father had roused his mother, in the middle of the night, saying that he knew now where that poor girl was hidden—up a chimney in the cellar of her mistress's own house. His father had not gone to rest again, but had started on his quest soon after daybreak.

A question to be asked here is, could the superintendent have received any description of the premises from any of his subordinates,—and had his mind dwelt for a moment on the cellar and the flue as a possible hiding-place? In this case, the picture might easily be renewed in a dream.

In 1876, a Captain Smalley, of West Droxbury, Massachusetts, U.S.A., received a handsome testimonial from the British Government as a recognition of his humanity in rescuing the crew of an Irish vessel in the previous winter. Captain Smalley's own story, as related at the time in American papers, was that on a certain November night, when six hundred miles out at sea, he awoke suddenly, strongly impressed by a dream, in which he had seen a number of men in imminent peril, whom he vainly attempted to

rescue. He told his wife at the time, saying he hoped that no shipwrecked crew stood in need of his services. On going to sleep again the dream was repeated with still greater distinctness—the men were seen to be on a wreck, in intense distress, and needing the utmost despatch if they were to be saved. The captain, waking, went on deck, and on the impulse of the moment altered the course of the vessel two points without any tangible reason; and then giving orders that he should be called at dawn, he retired to rest, and slept undisturbed. At daybreak he went aloft with his glass, and then discovered a ship far to windward with distress signals hoisted. Owing to the state of the wind and the waves, it was some hours before he could reach the wreck, whose crew had by that time betaken themselves to the boats, and were at once assisted on board Captain Smalley's vessel, just as the rising storm strengthened to a perfect hurricane, which raged for four days, and ultimately compelled Captain Smalley to take refuge in Gibraltar, instead of putting into Lisbon as he had intended.

Another picturesque and pleasant story comes from America, equally well attested by names, dates, etc. It was narrated in the *Hartford Times* of 1874, the editor vouching for its genuineness.

There was at that date resident in Hartford a Mr. John Eiswirth, a German by birth. He and his wife had been settled in America for nearly a quarter of a century. Soon after they came over, they had a letter announcing that the wife's brother was already on his way from the Fatherland to the States. They naturally expected soon to see him, but he never came, nor did they ever hear of him from that date for a period of nearly twenty-five years. But in the spring of 1874, Mr. John Eiswirth, peaceable citizen of Hartford, dreamed a dream. It began in a sufficiently common-place way, by his seeming to take a seat in the railway cars at the Hartford depôt. He was not aware of any intention or wish to go anywhere, but felt simply whirled through vast expanses of country. At last the train slackened and he got out, but did not know where he was. Moving on with the other passengers, he asked the first man he met for the name of the place where he had arrived. The man answered "St. Louis," and the dreamer was more puzzled than ever since he had no business there, and wished himself back in Hartford. While standing in a state of miserable hesitancy, he suddenly saw his wife's long-lost brother approaching him, and they greeted with joyful effusion! The next moment the worthy German found himself awake in his bed, in his own house in Hartford. But the dream had made a great impression on him, and he thought he would follow it up by sending a letter to his brother-in-law, directed to St. Louis, marking outside the envelope, "If not called for within ten days, return to John Eiswirth, Hartford, Conn." In afterwards telling the story, he declared that he felt this was but a foolish action and sure to lead to nothing. Judge of his surprise, when

two days later a letter with the postmark "St. Louis" was put into his hand, and proved to be from the missing relative himself! It appeared that on his first arrival in the new country he had mislaid his sister's address, and then, amid the struggle for existence and the novelty of his surroundings, had, as too often happens, allowed his old ties to slip out of mind—though he was now glad enough to renew them.

One would like to ask many questions about this story. Was there any reason for this dream occurring after the lapse of twenty-five years? Had there been any change or death in the family?—or any conversation about the lost brother, or other stirring of dormant feelings? Had the brother in St. Louis had any occasion for specially remembering and yearning after the relatives he had so long left unsought for? Further information on these points might shed some more light on the narrative. Again, might not many mysteries be cleared up if more people took the "foolish" course of plain John Eiswirth, when he sent his "test" letter to St. Louis?

We will conclude our paper with two incidents selected from a great mass of similar narratives related in the huge volumes issued a short time ago by the Society for Psychical Research. We may premise that all these narratives and their evidences were carefully sifted and weighed before their publication, and that in their original form names, places and dates are given with punctilious accuracy. As these can be found there by those who desire to see them, it is best, for manifold reasons to exclude them from an article intended only to interest the general reader and rather to incite him to scientific inquiry than to satisfy that searching spirit.

In a simple, straightforward letter, written in 1885, a homely Quakeress thus gives the particulars of her remarkable experience:—

"In my dream I saw two respectably-dressed females driving alone in a vehicle like a mineral-water cart. Their horse stopped at a water dam to drink, but as there was no footing he lost his balance, and in trying to recover it, he plunged right in. With the shock the women stood up and shouted for help, and their hats rose off their heads, and as all were going down, I turned away, crying 'was there no one at all to help them?' upon which I awoke and my husband asked me what was the matter. I related the above dream to him, and he asked me if I knew them. I said I did not, and thought I had never seen either of them. The impression of the dream and the trouble it brought was over me all day. I remarked to my son it was the anniversary of his birthday—and my own also—the tenth of first month (Quaker term for January), and this is why I remember the date.

"The following third month (March) I got a letter and newspaper from my brother in Australia, letting me know the sad trouble which had befallen him in the loss, by drowning, of one of his daughters and her companion. Thou wilt see by the description given of it in the

paper how the event corresponded with my dream. My niece was born in Australia and I never saw her"

The record of the Australian journal ran as follows:—

"Friday evening, January 11th. A dreadful accident occurred in the neighbourhood of W—— resulting in the death of two women It appears they were driving in a spring cart when they attempted to water their horse at a dam The dam was ten or twelve feet deep in one spot, and into this deep hole they must have inadvertently driven, for Mr. M'K——, going to the dam some hours afterwards, discovered the spring cart and horse under the water, and two women's hats floating on the surface"

The worthy Quakeress imagined that "considering our night is the Australian day," she must have been "in sympathy with the sufferers at the time of their accident," and hence her dream. But the editors of the Psychical Research Society shrewdly observe that she reckoned the difference of time the *wrong way*. The time in England which corresponded with the accident was the *early morning* of January 9th and so the dream which took place on the *night* of January 9th, must have followed the deaths by more than twelve hours. But the Quaker lady's husband, in appending a note to his wife's letter, unconsciously throws a singular light on this point—thus:

"As my wife's niece did not live with her father, he was not told of the accident *until the next morning*."

This would be about twelve hours after the death, and about the time the dream took place in England. Can it be that the bereaved father's distress, perhaps the very cry of his agony, impressed themselves upon the calm surface of his sleeping sister's mind?

The last story we shall give is very curious and most suggestive. Its narrator is an accomplished lady, who has done some excellent literary work, and is a member of an active and well-known philanthropic family.

She writes:—

"A servant, a Lincolnshire woman, has lived in our house for two years: and of her, whom I never see in the day, I dreamed, as portentously as if her troubles were my own. There is nothing remarkable in this young woman's character or experience. She is but an ordinary, rather rough specimen of a village girl, quiet and respectable.


"In my dream (day, month and year given) a long country lane was before me, in this I walked with the Lincolnshire cook, without speaking; yet I knew that my companion was going with me as a sort of escort to some errand of my own. Then a face appeared over a hedge: a solemn, silent face, exactly resembling that of the one who silently moved beside me: the sternest suffering was impressed upon the plain, hard-lined countenance. From beside me, the country servant instantly departed to follow the warning, voiceless form through the hedge into a little house. Only a long minute passed and the

servant rushed from the hedge, absolutely wringing her hands, crouching to the ground in dumb agony. 'Tis my sister called me: she beckoned me in: but she will not speak, she will not have me with her.' As she spoke, the vision returned. It looked over the low hedge, with the same indescribable expression of sadness unspeakable, of a terrible woe impossible of utterance. It flung back its sleeve, and lifting one arm, pointed to a single white spot in the centre of a finger. And as suddenly as I had fallen on this dream, so suddenly I awoke. I tried to cast off the shadow the dream had cast on me.

"I repeated my dream before I left my bedroom. (The dreamer's sister corroborates this.) I asked the housemaid whether she knew of any reason her fellow servant might have to fear to hear bad news. She said 'No.' Nothing was said about the dream during Friday. . . but the same evening came the news that the country cook's sister was very ill, and had prematurely been confined with a child born dead. . . . The coincidence of dream and fact were marvelously similar. The poor woman, whom I saw with such dumb appeal on her countenance, was alone, unable to speak, meeting her trouble alone, her husband, who is a policeman, being on night duty."

We presume that the suffering woman had never seen her sister's mistress. Can it be possible that her agonised thoughts, turning to her sorely-needed relative, simply fastened upon the most sensitive mind in the vicinity? Had "the white spot on the finger" any relevance whatever?—or was it another impression jumbled up—perhaps the reminiscence of some injury the dreamer had noticed on one of the poor people among whom her charitable labours lay? Again, this is just one of the vague, unreasonable kind of dreams which we all know, and about which we seldom think of making any inquiry—and, indeed, inquiry would, in most cases, lead to nothing. Such a dream as this, for instance, might as easily have been associated with a servant in the next house—of whom the lady could have asked no question. Or such dreams might easily be mixed up with personal or even secret affairs, in which case investigation would be met with indignation or with lies!

We have not yet exhausted this mysterious land of dreams. There is yet another class, where the unseen which is foreshadowed is not of the Present or the forthcoming—but of the remote Future. The marvellous gift of prophetic insight rising from the low fogs of fortune-telling and witchcraft, through the white mist of "second sight" to the pure empyrean of prophecy and poetry, seems to have a root in the strange symbolism of certain dreams. We may discuss some of these on a future occasion.



ON THE BORDERLAND.

STAY, kindly death, ere yet our solemn way
 Be entered on. Thou art the tardy friend
 I waited for through many a weary day,
 That thou might'st lead me to my journey's end.
 Through all my loud-voiced woe thou didst not come,
 Nor yet when low I lay in sorrow dumb !

I thought thou wouldst have been, long, long ago ;
 And learned to know thy face and love thy name ;
 But thou wert far from me in all my woe :
 What wonder, then, that I did give thee blame ?
 For, in the darkest hour of my soul's sky,
 No latch was lifted, but thy foot passed by !

And now thou ledest me with thy cold hand,
 While by me sway thy garments dark as night ;
 Yet stay, oh friend, that I by thee may stand,
 And waft a farewell from this solemn height
 To those dear ones who long shall wait and weep
 Ere yet " He giveth His beloved sleep ! "

Men say thou art a King, with steeds of fate
 Yoked to thy noiseless chariot of gloom ;
 And that thou leavest bare and desolate
 Bright human homes ; and bringest man to doom,
 Like broken spars thrown on a wave-lashed strand,
 Or scattered grain upon a storm-reaped land !

Stern, final guide, I would not call thee foe !
 For, in my life thou long hast had a place ;
 And, though thy vital breath is human woe,
 To me thou wearest a transfigured face :
 Through greater strength than thine my soul can sing
 Beside the beating of thy winnowing wing !

Thy smile is cold, as if all incomplete
 Were my poor fragment of a lowly life.
 How often weary were my bleeding feet !
 How weak my arm at best amidst the strife !
 Yet, think not, Death, the loyal miss their crown ;
 For, God takes up what mortals frail lay down !

ALEXANDER LAMONT.

MY CHANNEL PASSAGE.

BY C. N. CARVALHO.

TO a good sailor the crossing from Calais to Dover is, in a general way, wholly devoid of incident or adventure. The occasion to which I refer, however, proved an exception to this rule, and though the experience was, in many ways, trying to me, I can well imagine that an account of it might be amusing to others.

I was on the point of returning from one of the German baths where I had spent several weeks, when I received a letter from an old friend, now a widow, asking me to allow her son, a youth of seventeen, to travel home in my company.

"I must not tell Charley," she wrote, "that I put him under your care; that would be derogatory to his dignity; but I confess to you I shall be more comfortable if I know he is not travelling alone. He is so heedless he will never get into the right train, if someone does not look after him. He won't give you trouble in any other way," she added; "indeed, he may possibly be of use to you. He is a dear, good-natured fellow; you are sure to get on well together."

I had no objection to this arrangement. I would have done more than that to oblige Sophy—cousin Sophy, as I used to call her in my young days, though the relationship, if it existed, was a very distant one—so I wrote to Charley and told him to meet me at Cologne on a certain day which I named.

In due course the lad made his appearance. He was a good-looking young fellow, with bright, dark eyes and a winning smile, and had an air of being well satisfied with himself and his surroundings. He evidently took life easily. If the world were not made for Charley, it set no obstacles in his way. I don't know what he had learnt at school, but, if the rest of his attainments were to be judged by his knowledge of the German language, he had not exerted himself to any great extent. Charley never did, I found out later, exert himself if he could possibly avoid doing so.

We "got on," as his mother predicted, very comfortably. I have the talent, if I may call it one, of making boys or very young men at ease in my company, and my efforts in this case were very successful. Charley and I were soon on the most confidential terms. Before long he had favoured me with a description of his school-life in Germany, his views on the choice of a profession, and his tastes and favourite occupations; which last appeared, as far as I could make out, to be smoking, riding in the park, visiting the theatres, and other such lucrative pursuits.

Our journey to Brussels was destitute of adventure, and the fol-

lowing morning saw us on our road to Calais. Charley was a better traveller than his mother had led me to suppose. He was up and ready to start, though the hour fixed upon was a very early one; and at the railway station he registered the luggage with as much punctuality and exactness as a courier.

We found the sea, to use my companion's expression, lively. It was a fine, breezy day, with a bright blue sky overhead, and it was pleasant to sit and watch the great waves with their white crests chasing each other in their haste to get to shore. The boat was not full, which I was glad to notice—a crowded steamer is always disagreeable. Most of the passengers took refuge below, so we had the deck nearly to ourselves.

As we left the coast of France the wind grew stronger and my companion less talkative; so when the shore had faded from my view I settled myself comfortably on a cushion, took a book from my bag, and began to read. The story was an interesting one, and I was quite absorbed in it, till, roused by a change in the motion of the vessel, I looked up half expecting to see the white cliffs of Dover, and thinking what a short and pleasant run we had made. But no land was in sight; the steamer slackened speed, and in another moment came to a dead stop.

"I have come across a score of times," I said to Charley, who was lying on a rug at my feet, "but I never knew such a thing to happen before. It is bad enough when a train halts between two stations—that always makes me nervous—but at any rate one can get out. At sea, one feels doubly helpless."

"Can't you swim, Mrs. Calvert?" Charley asked, looking up into my face with an air of mock sympathy that was rather trying.

"No," I replied coolly, determined to give him no chance of making fun of me. "So you see if the boat should go down you have your work cut out for you. Go and see what is the matter, there's a good fellow."

There was nothing the matter—so Charley on his return reported. "It was all right and no end jolly (I am quoting Charley, remember) to be quite still. He wished they would go the whole way like that." How it was to be managed he did not say. And greatly to his disappointment the vessel, though making no progress, rocked in a manner that was decidedly unpleasant to anyone but a good sailor. I found it difficult to believe that we came to a standstill in mid-ocean for no reason, and when the excitement had a little calmed down I beckoned to the steward who was standing near me and begged him to explain the mystery.

"It's nothing of any consequence, ma'am," he replied with a friendly smile. "Only, of course it will delay us a bit. The stuffing has come out of the piston—so I hear—and the engine won't work. We'd try to sail, but the wind is dead against us—it always is, seems to me, when it might be of use."

Charley suggested that it was jealous of the engines, at which the steward was much amused. I asked what would be done.

"They've signalled for a tug," he replied. "It will take us across in no time. Don't you be afraid, ma'am; it will be all right." And off he walked.

Before long the tug came to our assistance. An insignificant little thing it looked, but it did its work well, and we were soon scudding along to the satisfaction of all on board—theoretically.

The wind was now higher than it had been and the deck once more clear. The waves from time to time broke over it and drenched me with spray. I laughed at first, but the showers soon became so frequent that I saw I must go below, and had risen with that intention, when the steward to whom I had before spoken came up and asked me if I would like a private cabin—there was one unoccupied.

Though a good sailor, I confess to feeling more comfortable in the fresh air than in a hot, close cabin; so I accepted this offer with alacrity, and was soon ensconced in a tiny room at the side of the ship, from which I could watch the progress of the gale in comparative comfort.

It was a grand sight to look into the clear, green walls of water that rose up higher than the ship's side; a sight, I imagine, rarely seen as I saw it, for I had the advantage of the sun's rays to illumine the water and render it more transparent. I tried to make my companion appreciate its beauty, but he took more interest in watching the fate of the various packages that had been left on the deck, which the water was tossing from side to side. He put on his mackintosh after awhile, and went out to see the fun—so he told me; but I suspected that my young friend, though not "slain" as he would put it, felt a little "melancholy," and was glad to get away from my keen eyes.

I saw him later standing at the side of the vessel, talking with a tall, fair-haired young man apparently about seven or eight and twenty, whose countenance had attracted me when we first came on board. The two were in striking contrast as they stood together, Charley's flashing black orbs—his strong point—seemed to lack expression in comparison with those of the stranger. I have never seen such a pair of tender, appealing eyes in any other man's face; they would never look angry or fierce I was sure, let the provocation be what it might—that they could look deeply sorrowful I was destined to see before we parted. I could scarcely imagine their owner pleading unsuccessfully for any woman's love, and as I gazed on him, romantic speculations as to his past life began to weave themselves in my brain.

A sudden lurch, a shake that seemed to strain every timber in the ship sent all thoughts of this kind out of my head. I was thrown violently on the floor, and the water rushed through the open door of my little chamber and drenched me as I lay. Half blinded and

wholly confused, I rose and looked around. The ship now rocked slowly and painfully but made no progress. The tug lay at some little distance—she had stopped also; the rope had evidently broken and we had parted company.

People now rushed up from below, calling and screaming, and for some little time the confusion was general. The friendly steward came at length to my aid and put things straight with true sailorlike rapidity. He advised me to keep my door fastened in future and to place my cushions on the floor. I declined to do this, however, saying that such an accident was not likely to happen a second time.

"Don't be too sure, ma'am," he rejoined with a knowing shake of the head. "They've put on another rope, but the sailors tell me it's no stronger than the first one."

Charley came up bringing his new friend, whom he introduced as Captain Fortescue. I made light of my disaster, though I was far from comfortable, as anyone who has had a bath of salt-water under similar circumstances will readily understand. My cabin just held the three of us, and we sat and chatted together and ate biscuits; it was too rough to think of taking a regular meal. Captain Fortescue told us how he had come from India when he was quite a child, and since then he had made three or four voyages out and home. He did not mind the wind, he said, and this was not a storm; it was —

What it was I never heard, for at that moment the treacherous rope gave way again, and it was only Charley's quickness of hand that saved me from a severe blow. I was glad now to take the steward's advice, and, amid much laughing and joking between the young men, my cushions were removed. The precaution was not taken too soon. In a very few minutes we went through the experience again. Things were now getting serious. Captain Fortescue went in search of the skipper and spoke to him. I could not hear what was said, but such a cloud of anxiety settled on the young soldier's face that I rose in terror and asked if there were any danger.

"Danger? None whatever, madam," the captain said, reassuringly. "No danger at all," he repeated. "We may not see Dover to-night—that's the worst that will happen to us. The tug has gone to fetch a good strong rope, but when it will pick us up, or where, I cannot say. We'll drift into the North Sea, I reckon."

"Into the North Sea," I exclaimed.

"With this wind, it is very possible," he continued. "Not but that we are safe enough there; it's only the delay——"

"Only!" interrupted Captain Fortescue. "Oh, how I wish I had gone in that tug. I must be in London to-night."

"You should have told me sooner," said the captain good-naturedly. "I could have managed that easily, but it's too late now. Of course I kept it quiet, or half the passengers would have wanted

to go in her : more than the boat could hold. I trust your business is not important."

"Is there enough food on board?" inquired Charley, the excitement of the situation having quite driven away all discomfort arising from the motion of the vessel.

"As much as we shall want," replied the skipper, laughing. "In weather like this the passengers don't require much. You are a wonderful sailor, madam," he went on, with a polite bow to me. "Captain Fortescue is an old traveller, he tells me, so I am not surprised he keeps his sea legs; but it is not often we find a lady so much at her ease in a gale like this, and in the Channel, too—the worst place for a chopping sea all the world over."

I laughed. Captain Fortescue, who had been listening gloomily, now asked if he could have a boat.

The captain glanced at him to see if he were serious, then he replied :

"I wish I could give you one, but it is out of my power. We have but two, and we may need them. I do not expect that, but I must be prepared. Besides, I have no men to send with you, and I dare not let you go alone."

"And one boat leaks," interrupted a sailor who had overheard the captain's words. "Better attempt to swim to shore than go in one of them."

The captain said nothing, but I could see he was annoyed. As he strode away, Charley turned to young Fortescue and asked why he was in such a hurry.

"I am bound to be in London by ten o'clock to-morrow morning at the latest," he replied. "Delay is impossible. It is a matter of life and death—to me."

"Telegraph," put in Charley with a wicked smile. Captain Fortescue gave an impatient gesture. I laid my hand on the boy's arm to check him. I was sure the need was urgent.

"Mrs. Calvert," Captain Fortescue resumed as he took a seat at my side, "our young friend, luckily for him, knows nothing of these things; but you, I am sure, will sympathise with me when I tell you how the case stands. To-morrow is—was to have been—my wedding day. If I do not appear in church to-morrow what will *she* think? Or, for I know she will forgive me, what will her parents think? They have only consented reluctantly as it is." (This seemed to escape from him involuntarily.) "In less than a week, too, I must start for India to join my regiment. I had hoped to have taken my wife with me; but now——"

"No one will think ill of you," I said earnestly. "Anxious they may be, but the anxiety will not last long. Every newspaper will report the non-arrival of the Calais packet; and there is no danger, the captain says."

"Poor child," he muttered half to himself; "and I would give my

life to spare her pain. That will tell them nothing," he went on aloud; "they do not know I am out of England."

I made no reply. It seemed intrusive to inquire further as I could suggest no remedy. His was indeed a hard case. After a short spell of silence, he left me and paced up and down the deck, scanning the horizon attentively from time to time. Charley settled himself for a nap. It was getting late now and the sky becoming cloudy and threatening. I heard someone say if we had rain it would bring down the wind.

It was a strange scene to my unaccustomed eyes. There we lay, helpless and inert, tossed to and fro at the mercy of the winds and waves. Not a sail was in sight; not a puff of smoke: we seemed alone in the world. I was much impressed by it. My spirits, never very buoyant, sank rapidly. Was it true, as the captain had maintained, that there was no danger? Few of us, I imagine, had so urgent a call as Captain Fortescue, but still, what terrible apprehension our non-appearance would cause in many a home. In my own case, I had little to fear. My husband was in the north of England on business, and it was doubtful if he could return in time to meet me. Besides, he was not nervous or excitable, and would probably take my unpunctuality with equanimity. Walter was never frightened at anything, I was wont to say, and though I had often chafed at his insensibility, I was thankful for it now. But what would cousin Sophy say?

I glanced at her boy, now sleeping placidly at my side. In the morning, when all was gay and bright around me, I had pictured a happy future for Charley. I was not so sure of it now. There were lines about his mouth that showed a want of reliance and self-control, perhaps of sincerity. He needed the guidance of a firm hand, and that I feared he would not find. He would be but an insecure prop for his mother to lean upon. Still he was all she had, and if any harm came to him—I could not pursue that train of thought; it was too painful. I bent over him and lifted a dark curl from his forehead. My touch, light as it was, roused him.

"Bless you, no," he said, irreverently, when I asked him if his mother would be anxious. "Don't let that trouble you. The old lady won't expect me, Mrs. Calvert; I never come to my time. I do it on principle; it saves her a deal of worry. If I don't turn up in time for my wedding, people will only say, 'Just like Charley.' I say, did you ever see such a thing," he went on in a lower tone as Captain Fortescue passed us; "that fellow looks as if he were going to be hanged."

I have no experience of condemned criminals, but I could not endorse this description of Captain Fortescue. That he was suffering keenly was evident. I have, I think, a smaller share of curiosity in my composition than is given to most females, still I confess I should have liked to know the story of that young man's life; he interested

me deeply. Had I questioned him, he would probably have told me much and have found relief in so doing, but that was impossible to me, and he was as reticent in his way as I in mine. I could only strive to make him forget his trouble by dwelling on indifferent topics.

But though he had such a heavy load on his heart, he was not unmindful of my comfort, and as night came on he wrapped me up carefully and put his own fur-lined cloak over my knees, saying I had nothing dry enough to keep me warm. Then he ordered supper for us, which meal I could not prevail on him to share, and showed himself full of resources, as a soldier should be. Greta—I had caught sight of the name traced in enamelled letters on a locket he wore—would have a tender, careful husband, I thought. I wished I could see her and tell her how much I appreciated his kindness. I hoped she was worthy of the affection he lavished on her. After supper, Charley ran on with a string of nonsense that, wild as it was, did succeed in bringing a smile to the young lover's lips. He had taken a fancy, as most people did, to the bright, merry-hearted lad, and did not mind his raillery—and I must own that Charley's words, provoking as they often were, were never ill-natured.

Where we were we had no idea, nor do I think had anyone on board. The captain, if he knew, was not communicative. The sailors said we were drifting northward; the morning would show where. Meanwhile, the darkness was profound; there was no moon, and our stock of oil, being very small, was not to be wasted.

It must have been past twelve o'clock when my companions rose, saying I should get no rest if they did not leave me. I was much too excited to sleep soundly in such uncomfortable surroundings, but I must have lost myself for a while for I could hardly recognise where I was when the voice of Captain Fortescue sounded close beside me.

"Mrs. Calvert, I am going," he said, hurriedly. "Charley will explain. You must let me know how you get on; here is my address. I have not a minute to spare. No, no, keep the cloak. I cannot take it from you now. Good-bye."

He put a card into my hand, and was gone. What had happened? I was only half awake, or I would have risen to follow him. I sat up and tried to clear my thoughts, but in vain.

"Wasn't it a splendid chance for him!" cried Charley as he burst into my cabin, flushed with excitement and delight. "We hadn't gone to bed, you know. Fortescue wanted me to lie down, but as he wouldn't, no more would I. It was a rare go. He kept close by the skipper, determined not to miss another chance. All of a sudden we heard a shout and a whistle, and there came alongside a little steam launch, looking like a toy next to us.

"What's up? Who are you?" cried a voice.

"*Samphire*, Calais and Dover packet boat," replies our captain.

"A little out of your course, I should say, if I may make so bold,"

the launch said satirically, and then ensued an explanation, offers of service, and so on—sort of mouse and lion business—the launch is such a dot. ‘Could they put anybody ashore?’ the launch asked.

“Could they? You should have seen our bridegroom. He leaned with his body half over the side, talking and shouting; then he rushed off to you, came back like a shot and leaped into the boat. He is off, and half-a-dozen more—all the launch had room to carry. I’d have liked no better fun than to have gone too,” continued my young protector, with an air of importance, “only you see I had you to look after. Fortescue says he’ll wire the mother and Mr. Calvert too as soon as he touches land, and tell them we are safe—it was he who thought of that. So that’s all right and I’m going to bed,” he concluded. “Wonder who will get in first, the *Samphire* or the cockle-shell. Good-night.” And Charley, forgetting his manhood in his excitement, bestowed a kiss on me as he departed.

The cockle-shell, as it proved, won the race. It must have been nearly mid-day before a tug came to our help, and then it was sent by the owner of the launch. Some of our passengers got off at daylight on passing steamers, but I remained where I was and landed at Dover on the afternoon of the second day. I was too weary to travel to London then, so stayed for the night at the Lord Warden: as did many of the other passengers.

At Charing Cross we had quite an enthusiastic reception. Many of our fellow passengers were in the train whose friends came to meet them. Such kissing and crying as went on would have led anyone, ignorant of the circumstances, to imagine we had been in serious danger. Our party behaved better than the others. Cousin Sophy embraced her boy with exuberant delight and bore him off in triumph. My husband was certainly more demonstrative than usual, but with one of his quiet temperament that is not saying much. I put my arm within his and was about to leave the station, when we were stopped, and to my infinite surprise, I found myself shaking hands with Captain Fortescue. A very sweet-looking girl was on his arm, to whom he introduced me with a mixture of pride and shyness very pleasant to see.

“My wife, Mrs. Calvert, is very anxious to know you. We leave England to-morrow night. I am so glad to meet you again.”

He had sent to inquire, so my husband told me afterwards, when I was expected in London, and, although his time in England was so short, made a point of coming to meet me. What I had done to deserve his gratitude I am at a loss to know.

“You must let us drive you home,” he added; and without waiting for my reply ushered me into a carriage that was drawn up at the door of the station; and as soon as my trunks had been collected and placed on a cab, we four drove swiftly through the Park to South Kensington.

“I congratulate you most heartily,” I said as soon as I could find

words. "I am so thankful you were in time. Believe me, I have often thought of you."

"I was sure you would," he said. "No one was ever so kind and sympathising. It was a very near thing, though."

"You should have seen him, Mrs. Calvert," broke in Mrs. Fortescue, who seemed as frank and communicative as her husband was reticent. "We were all assembled in church, and I was getting just a little nervous, when in rushed Allan in a grey tweed suit, all dusty and travel-stained, his hair wild, a travelling cap in his hand—oh! such a figure!—His colour was coming and going like a girl's. I was so frightened I could not speak. Mamma said, 'Oh, Allan, what is the matter; why are you not dressed?' 'Never mind,' said he, 'Greta is not going to marry my clothes. Thank Heaven, I am here. Let us get on; it is nearly twelve o'clock.'—This did not satisfy my father. 'I must know more,' he said, sternly. 'You shall as soon as the service is over,' Allan continued, and then he pulled a newspaper out of his pocket and put it into papa's hand—he always thinks of everything. 'I was on board that boat,' he added; 'you can read it if you like. Do begin, please,' this to the clergyman. I confess that when we came to the place where they ask if there is any impediment to the marriage I feared papa would interfere; and so he would he said afterwards only he does not hear very well, and being rather excited, he missed it. When all was over we went to the vestry and heard Allan's story—all he would tell us.—Do you know why he went over to France?"

"No," I replied. "I asked no questions."

"Dear Greta, never mind that now," Captain Fortescue entreated.

Greta blushed, and then with a smile went on to relate how on their way home from church they had stopped at Captain Fortescue's lodgings that he might change his dress, and this took so long that her people began to think Allan had eloped with her and was not coming to the wedding breakfast.

"Which is just what I should have liked to do," interrupted the Captain. "Is this your house, Mrs. Calvert?" he added as the carriage stopped. "Must we say good-bye, or will you let us look in again to-morrow morning? We are staying at Bailey's hotel close by."

I pressed them to come in then, but they could not stay, they were engaged. I was not sorry to have a quiet evening with my husband. We had been separated for many weeks and had much to say to one another. The morning brought my young friends again—this time to say farewell in real earnest. Greta's voice trembled as she spoke of the perils of a soldier's life, but I saw the girl had a brave heart and would not try to keep her husband from his duty.

Our interview would have been a sad one had not Charley broken in upon us, and with his never-failing spirits and lively sallies prevented our dwelling on painful subjects. He was quite smitten with young Mrs. Fortescue, and rattled on in praise of her husband

as if he had known him all his life. I sent him upstairs after awhile to fetch the fur-lined cloak, which I had neglected to restore to its owner the day before, and seizing a moment when the Captain and Mr. Calvert were at the other end of the room, Greta began in a low tone to give me a brief account of her husband's hurried journey so near his wedding-day.

"Of course it was to do a kindness," she said earnestly; "and equally of course he cannot bear to have a word said about it. One of my brothers had got into a difficulty"—a debt of honour, I suspect, but Greta did not go into details—"Allan knew my father would never forgive the boy, and off he rushed to his assistance, without letting anyone know where he had gone to. I can never be grateful enough to him," she whispered as she rose to take leave, her eyes glistening with tears.

I was truly sorry to part with these young people; strangers though they were, I felt towards them quite like old friends. Of the Captain—he is Major now—I hear through the newspapers, and know him to be a brave and gallant soldier. From the same source, too, I learn they have several children; but except a Christmas card now and then there is little direct communication between us. But I know they will return to England ere long, and then we shall meet again.



"JUST BEYOND."

UPON the bosom of the stream
We idly float and idly dream;
Beyond that shadowy point may be
A fairy land for you and me!
The point is rounded—nothing there
But moonlit stream and moonlit air!

And so through life—with each new spring
Come questions—What will this year bring?
The year dies, having brought no more
Than all the years that went before.
And still, oh, foolish heart and fond,
Your fairy land lies "just beyond."

E. NESBIT